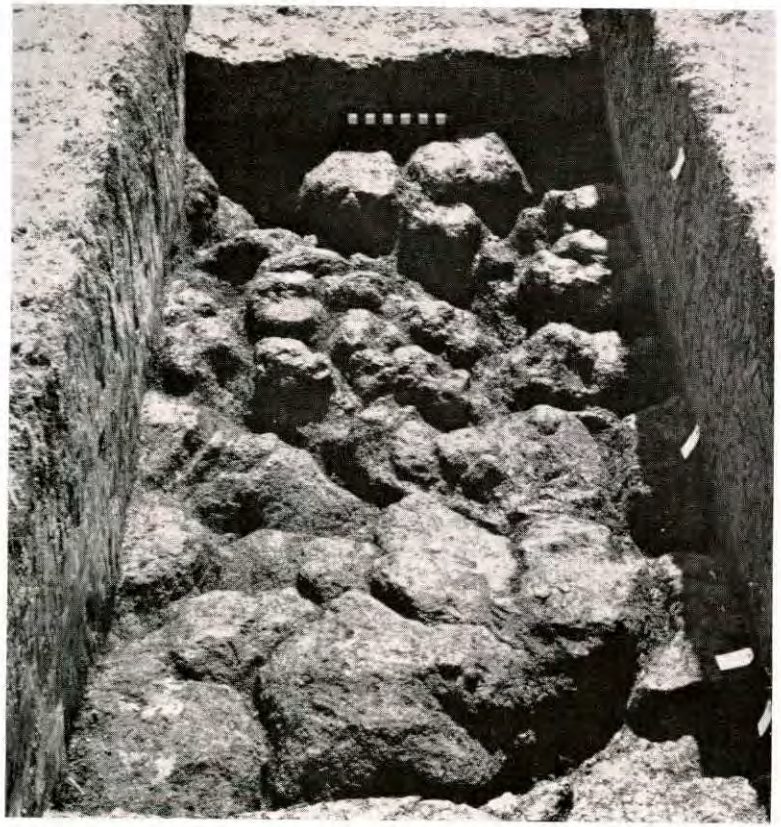
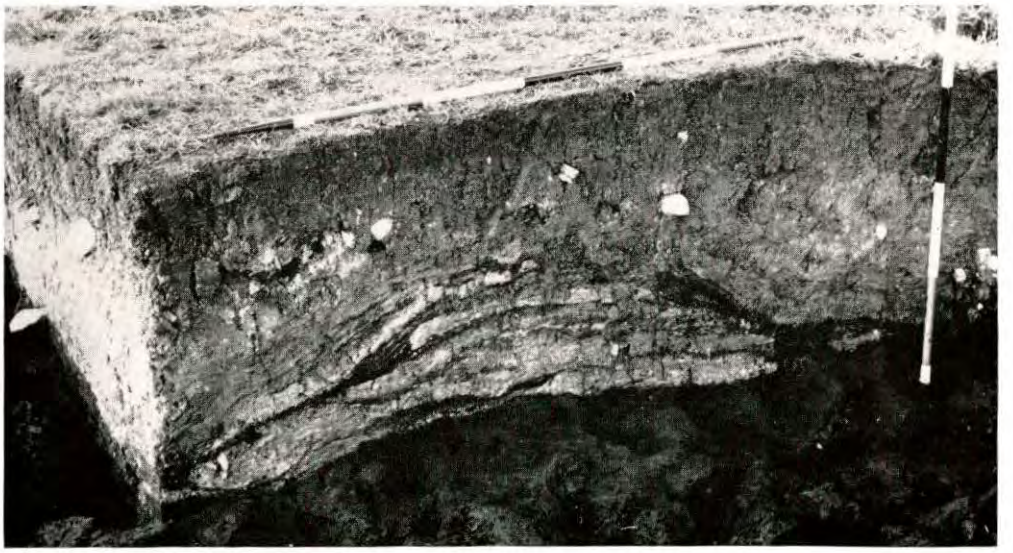


PL. IV A MEARE EAST, 1966:
Cutting F, "cut and laid peat blocks" on surface of natural peat;
taken from south-west.

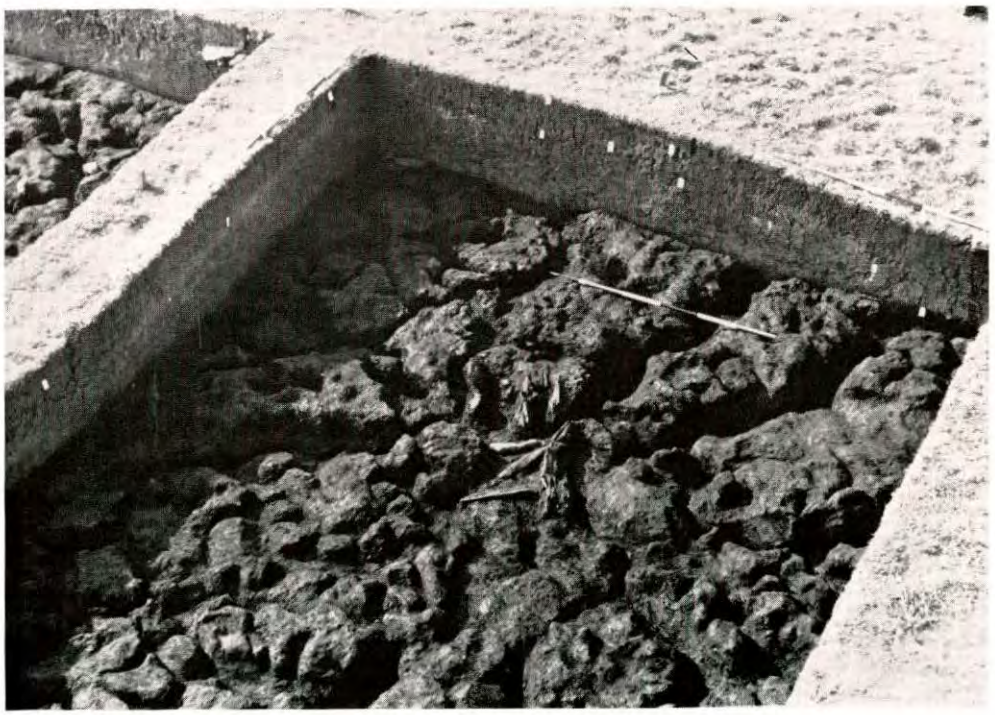
PL. IV B MEARE EAST, 1966:
Cutting F, birch roots and trunk buried in the peat,
near the surface of the peat.

PL. V A MEARE EAST, 1966:
Cutting F, timbers lower in the peat; taken from the south-west.



PL. V B MEARE EAST, 1966:
Cutting C, section of mound 34 EV; taken from north-east.

PL. VI A MEARE EAST, 1966:
Cuttings C and D, taken from south-east. Showing section of mounds 35 and 36 EV, and of Mr. Gray's trial hole, in foreground; section of mound 34 EV, in background.



PL. VI B MEARE EAST, 1966:
Cutting C, peat surface, with timbers; taken from north-west.

PL. VII A GATCOMBE, 1967:
Trench A I, north face of defence wall.

PL. VII B GATCOMBE, 1967:
Trench A I, disturbed bedrock.

PL. VIII A GATCOMBE, 1967:
Trench A IV, east face of defence wall.

PL. VIII B GATCOMBE, 1967:
Trench A II, wall A (inside face of defence wall in the background).

EXCAVATIONS AT MEARE EAST, 1966

An interim report and discussion

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This excavation set out to enquire further into certain questions about the site which had not been fully answered by the excavations of Dr. Bulleid and Mr. Gray.[1] It was

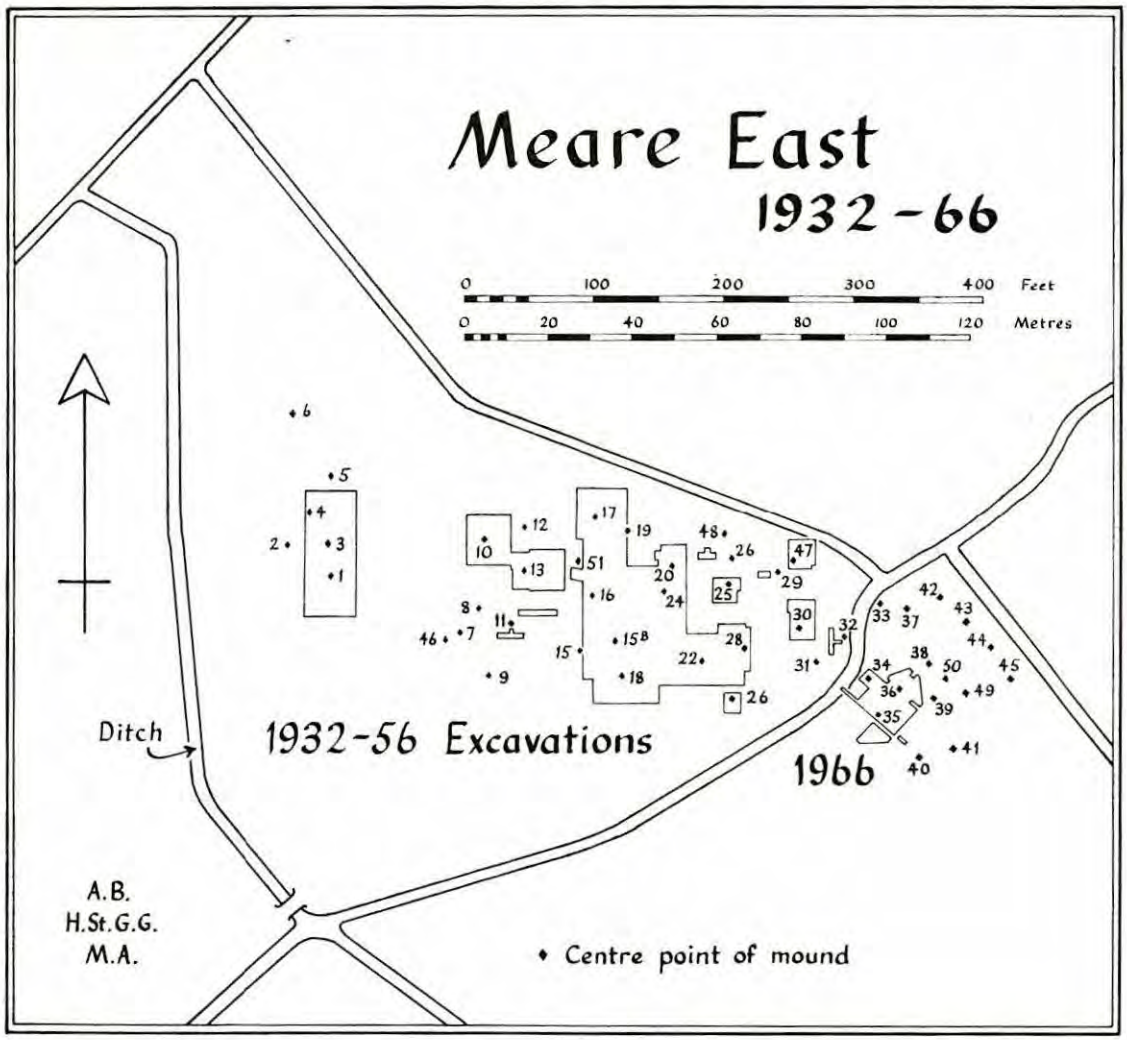

FIG. 1 MEARE EAST: overall plan of excavated areas, 1932-66
(see *M.L.V.* **1**, 2, Fig. 1)

[1] For this earlier work, see Dr. Arthur Bulleid and H. St. George Gray, *Meare Lake Village*, **1** (1948), **2** (1956), **3** (1967, edited by Mrs. M. A. Cotton): these volumes contain the definitive report on the 1910-33 excavations of the *western* group of mounds. The author is working on the material from Bulleid and Gray's 1932-56 excavations of the *eastern* group of mounds, unpublished at the death of the two excavators. The relationship of the two groups of mounds is shown on the plan in *M.L.V.* **1**, 2; the area excavated in the eastern group of mounds is shown on the plan, Fig. 1 of this report. Interim reports by Bulleid and Gray appeared in these *Proceedings* annually 1932-38 and 1948-56.

partly successful in finding structures and objects like those carefully recorded by Bulleid and Gray; reconsideration of these structures suggests that some can be interpreted in a different manner from that put forward by Bulleid and Gray, and provides a framework for a new chronology of the site. In order to confirm or reject this preliminary re-interpretation, however, further excavation is needed.[2]

This interim report presents, firstly, a summary of the phases of the site as revealed by the 1966 results; secondly, details of some features of the 1966 excavations, where such details are necessary to an understanding of these phases; thirdly, discussion of preliminary conclusions drawn from the 1966 results, where these conclusions differ from Bulleid and Gray's interpretation of their own excavations; and finally, a necessarily brief summary of the history of the site, based on these conclusions, and an outline of some main problems still unsolved.

Summary of the Results of 1966

Three adjoining mounds were excavated: mound 36 EV (totally); mound 35 EV (three-quarters of its area); mound 34 EV (half).[3] These constituted an area roughly forty by seventy feet (Fig. 2). From this work, the following phases in the history of the site can be reconstructed:

Peat phase (Neolithic and Bronze Age): peat grew in wet conditions; then the upper layers of the peat bog, as they dried out, began to form a soil.

Village phase 1 (Early Iron Age): people using plain coarse pottery built wooden structures on the peat surface. Perhaps of the third century B.C.

Village phase 2 (Early Iron Age): smallish loads of clay, black earth, ash and charcoal, mixed with much broken pottery, and worked and unworked bone, were dumped to form rubbish tips — the "superimposed hearths" of the earlier excavations. The pottery was better made but still plain: perhaps of the second century B.C.

Village phase 3 (Early Iron Age): larger loads of clay, black earth, ash and charcoal, mixed with smaller amounts of pottery and other objects, were dumped to form the mounds: some decorated pottery was introduced at this time. Perhaps of the late second to early first century B.C.

Village phase 4: a scattering, over earlier layers, of fragments of bone and pottery, occupation debris from dwellings nearby. This pottery, mostly fine, sand-tempered, and often decorated, includes "Glastonbury ware" styles. A coin dates the end of this (possibly long-lived) phase to the early decades A.D.

Roman phase 1: a spread of mussel shells shows that the area was flooded with fresh water in the first century A.D.

[2] Further excavations at Meare in 1968 (below, p. 38) have broadly confirmed the re-interpretation offered here.

[3] After excavating the western group of mounds, Bulleid and Gray restarted from "1" their numbering systems, for both mounds and finds of the eastern group of mounds. They consistently appended after mounds and finds of the eastern group of mounds the letters "EV" (for "East Village"). I have continued this, and also, to obviate confusion, append after finds and mounds of the western group of mounds the letters "WV". Thus " mound 20 WV" and "EE.12 WV" refer to mound 20 and brooch 12 of the *western* group of mounds, that is, to the published numbers of *M.L.V.* **1, 2** and **3**; "mound 20 EV" and "EE.12 EV" refer to mound 20 and brooch 12 of the *eastern* group of mounds, that is, to the numbers marked by Bulleid and Gray on plans, sections and finds of the unpublished 1932-56 excavations.

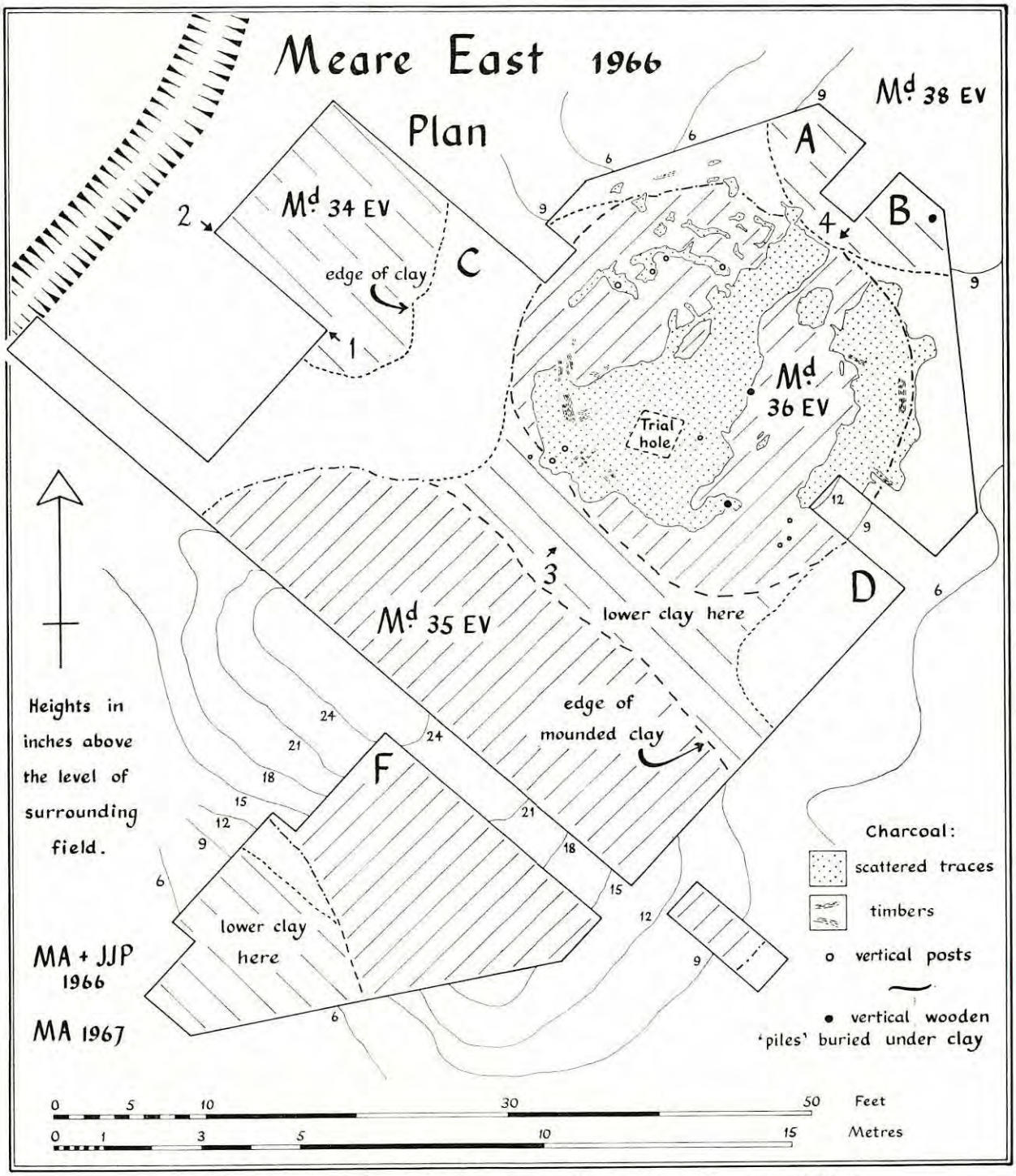

FIG. 2 MEARE EAST 1966: plan of excavated area, giving positions of sections published.

ROMAN PHASE 2: re-occupation in the fourth century A.D., possibly identified in the 1966 excavations, certainly seen in the earlier excavations in the eastern group of mounds.

RECENT: some time after the fourth century A.D., repeated floodings left a thick deposit of flood-clay all over the site.

DETAILS OF EXCAVATION IN 1966

PEAT PHASE:

About 200 square feet (Cutting F) was dug through natural peat strata to reach (at a depth of six feet below the ground surface) soft blue-grey lias clay containing lias stone lumps.

Borings showed that this clay was probably over five feet thick. At various levels in the peat were tree-trunks, branches and roots:[4] it was originally thought that the lower timbers, because they had flat upper surfaces, had been worked, but it was later decided that this feature was a result of the rotting of natural tree-trunks partly buried in water. Some timbers had roots still attached. The water table was reached at three feet below the ground surface, and, though it dropped during the excavation, constant pumping was needed in this deep cutting. Peat monoliths covering the whole of the sequence were taken for examination; results are not yet available.

Over the whole area, the surface of the peat was hard and fibrous; it was roughly level, not depressed in the centre of the mounds by the weight of clay upon it (Fig. 3). This hard surface was everywhere grooved with channels, six to twelve inches wide and up to twelve inches deep; the channels were filled, and the surface of most of the hard peat was covered, with a soft, fine, black earth, which stained the hands.[5]

This peat was at first interpreted as cut and laid blocks of peat, placed to build up a foundation.[6] Wood appeared immediately under the blocks (Pl. IV B). However, the hard "blocks" were not distinct from the softer natural peat beneath them, but continuous with it, and they could be separated from it only by cutting. They therefore appear to be of natural growth. The grooving may perhaps be the result of erosion by water. An alternative suggestion is that this was the hummocky and tussocky surface of a growing peat bog. However, the hardening of the surface very definitely suggests that the surface layers of the peat dried and shrank at some time: peat which has dried out becomes hard and does not return to its original soft state on re-wetting; the cracks may, then, have formed during the shrinking. The fine black earth is perhaps the first sign of a soil forming.[7]

The date of this desiccation is vital to interpreting the site. It seems unlikely that it has happened recently through drainage of the levels, for it seems more likely that such desiccation would occur before the area was covered with its present Recent capping of flood-clay, which would restrict evaporation from the peat surface. The fact that the "superimposed hearths" and clay mounds had not at Meare sunk into the peat surface, as they had at the Glastonbury village, suggests that the peat surface was desiccated

4 See Pl. IV B, wood near the surface of the peat; Pl. V A, timbers lower in the peat.
5 See Fig. 3, and Pls. IV A and VI B.
6 See Pl. IV A; and cf. *M.L.V.* **2**, e.g. p. 153, para. 2.
7 It compares well with the descriptions given of modern soils of the Sedgemoor series nearby, which are organic soils forming on peat: Avery, 1955, pp. 63 and 122-3.

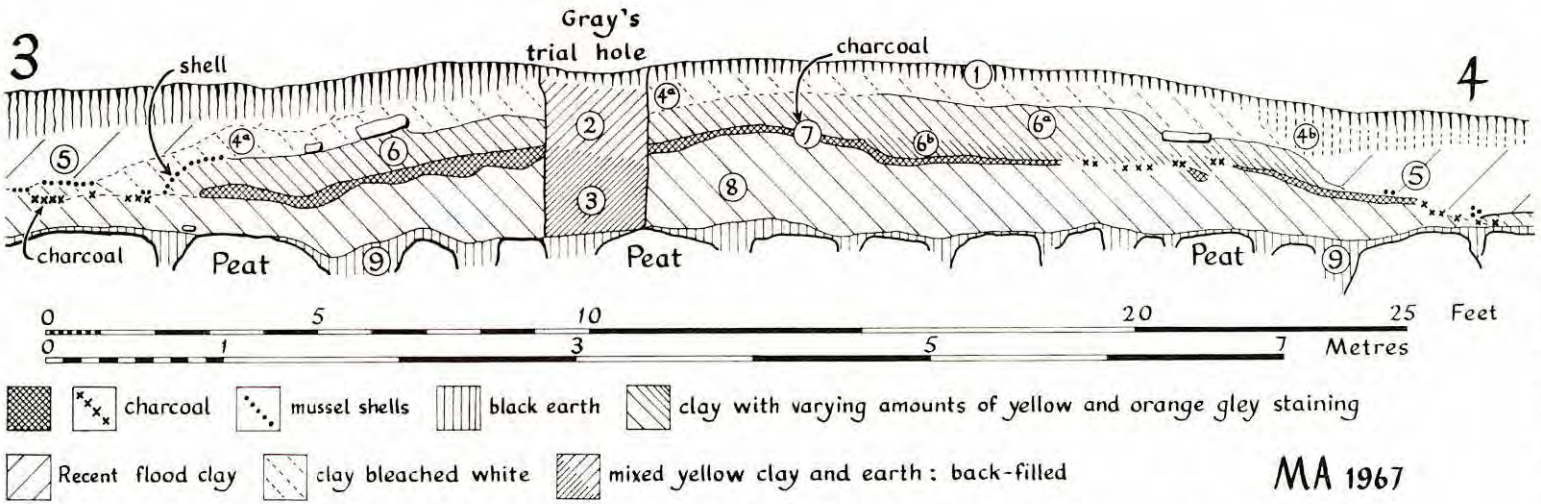

FIG. 3 MEARE EAST 1966: section 3 - 4, as marked on Fig. 2, across mound 36 EV. Numbered layers are:

(1)	dark grey-brown turf	Modern
(2)	light yellow-brown clay, with some soil	Modern
(3)	dark yellow-brown clay, with more soil and charcoal	Modern
(4a)	originally dark brown clay, when moist; bleaching whitish, with fine cracks into small lumps, on drying	? Roman 2
(4b)	as (4a), with very uncertain distinction between the 2 layers	Recent
(5)	dark brown clay, cracking with large cracks into large lumps	Recent flood-clay
(6)	grey clay, with orange staining, especially at bottom	Village 3c
(6a)	grey clay with little orange staining	Village 3c
(6b)	grey clay with very much orange staining	Village 3c
(7)	charred wood, grain and peas, in dark grey clay	Village 3b
(8)	grey clay with much orange staining	.... Village 3a
(9)	soft fine black earth	Village 1

and firm by Village phase 2. This is not conclusive proof of the view that the desiccation had taken place before the first occupation in Village phase 1, but this view seems the more reasonable on the general grounds that occupation is more likely to have started on a solid surface than on a spongy one, and is supported by the discovery of only a small amount of wood substructure or crannog construction at Meare.[8] The work done by Godwin (1941, pp. 125-6) on pollen analysis and peat stratigraphy at the eastern edge of mound 15B EV unfortunately does not provide a useful estimate of the date of this desiccation, as erosion of the peat surface, whether by water action or by desiccation and oxidization, has very probably removed the topmost layers of the sequence.[9]

VILLAGE PHASE 1:

Sealed under the clay dumps forming mounds 35 EV and 36 EV were found grouped sherds of thick-walled, plain pottery, tempered with large lumps of lias. There were about half-a-dozen groups, each usually of one-quarter to one-third of a whole pot. The surfaces of this pottery still showed modelling marks which had not been smoothed or burnished away; of their rims, none were bead-rims, while one was a pronounced T-rim. These features distinguish this pottery sharply from the thinner-walled plain sherds also present on the site (which have a smoothed or burnished surface and are tempered with sand or crushed stone) and suggest that the thick-walled pottery is earlier in date than the thin-walled.

Three vertical wooden "piles" were found. Under mound 36 EV were two, shaped to a point at their bottom ends and driven vertically into the peat. These were both circular in cross-section, and about three feet long; the peat covered about the bottom two feet. One of these piles had been notched on either side, evidently to be jointed to other, probably horizontal, timbers; significantly, these notches were found at the level of the surface of the peat, suggesting that the earliest structures were built directly on the surface of the peat. The upper foot of each of these piles, projecting vertically up out of the peat, was covered and surrounded by the clay of mound 36 EV; in neither case did the tip of the pile project through even the lower dump of the two superimposed dumps of clay forming mound 36 EV. A similar vertical pile, also completely covered and surrounded by dumped clay, was found sealed under the low clay of mound 38 EV. In the case of each of these three piles, the upper end, projecting from the peat, grew thinner, harder and more shrunken towards its top, where each terminated in a broken-off point. This is evidently the effect of the rotting of that part of the pile which was exposed to air. No traces of jointing or working were identified on the shrunken upper parts of the piles.[10]

[8] On the plans, Bulleid and Gray marked very little timber "substructure" in the area of houses 8 WV, 13 WV, 24 WV, and the possible house 7 WV: the only strong "substructure" marked is that of house 9 WV, since the circular house 34 WV in fact is unrelated to the timber "substructure" under mound 34 WV.

[9] Godwin tentatively referred the peat immediately under the clay of mound 15B EV to the very start of his Pollen Zone VIII. This would correlate with the very beginning of the Iron Age (Dewar and Godwin, 1963), but the correlation cannot be taken as reliable evidence that desiccation took place as early as this.

[10] Of the 11 "piles" published by Bulleid and Gray, only *G.L.V.* X.95 (*G.L.V.* **1,** 350) is similar to the 3 "piles" found in 1966; and this X.95 is stated to have been *shaped* to a point at its upper end, not to have rotted like the 1966 examples. All the other 10 appear to have been "knobbed piles" like the four on *G.L.V.* **1,** Pl. LVIII (f.p. 344); and these photos suggest the rotted end, which must be the *top* end of a vertical "pile", was the knobbed end. However, this difference may reflect only the fact

That these piles, when found, were covered by clay is not conclusive evidence that they had not been driven through the clay, but, as noted below, no convincing marks of postholes through the clay were seen on the clay surface or lower down in the clay. This, combined with the presence and early character of the pottery found under the dumped clay and the evidence for the jointing of the piles to other timbers at the level of the surface of the peat, suggests that the earliest structures of the area dug in 1966 were built before the dumping of the clay of the mounds. This would be quite feasible if the peat in this area had already become dry and desiccated.

Such traces of a timber structure reveal little of its character. The stratigraphical position of the circular wooden house-structures found by Bulleid and Gray is discussed below (p. 32), where it is suggested they also belong to this early phase.

There was no sign of a wood or wicker-work foundation; several pieces of timber were found lying flat on the peat surface, but close inspection showed that none had been worked; one tree-stump was found on the surface of the peat under the dumped clay, apparently rooted *in situ*.

Drier conditions, then, permitted a settlement in this area immediately upon the surface of the dead and desiccated peat bog. To this early settlement should probably belong the circular wooden house-structures found by Bulleid and Gray.

VILLAGE PHASE 2:

Mound 34 EV was a piled up series of alternate layers of clay and black earth with charcoal; there were two layers of clean and discoloured sand.[11] This is clearly very like the "superimposed hearths" of the Meare and Glastonbury publications.[12]

However, for several reasons, this mound is best seen as a rubbish tip, *not* a series of hearths:

1. the discoloration (to an orange colour) was due to orange-red lumps of ferric oxides formed by oxidization of iron compounds in the clay, not to burning; this orange colour should not be taken as evidence of deliberate burning;[13]
2. there appeared to be several overlapping centres of tipping, not just one series of hearths (Pl. VI A);
3. the quantities of pottery and bone from the black earth with charcoal were nearly all unburnt;[14]

that 7 of these 11 "piles" were found lying horizontal, while of the other 4 Bulleid and Gray do not state whether they were found vertical or horizontal. These published "piles" may therefore have had a different function from that of being wall or fence posts; Bulleid and Gray did not publish photos or detailed drawings of individual examples of the latter. The vertical "piles" which appear on the section drawings (at, for example, *M.L.V.* **2,** Fig. 32, p. 136 and *G.L.V.* **1,** Fig. 20, p. 99) and photos (*G.L.V.* **1,** Pl. XXXIV, f.p. 156) do not appear to be "knobbed", and look more like the 1966 "piles".

11 See Fig. 4, and Pls. V B and VI A. The layers of clay were often much stained yellow and orange by oxidization of the iron compounds in the clay. The mechanism by which such features form naturally is described below, fn. 15. A considerable amount of pottery and worked and unworked bone came from the black earth layers.

12 See *M.L.V.* **1,** 150 (section drawing), Pl. XXVIII (f.p. 128, photo of section) and Pl. XXVII (f.p. 124, photo of section); and *G.L.V.* **1,** Pl. XXXVII B (f.p. 164, photo of section, mound 74) and Pl. XXXVIII (drawn section, same mound).

13 *Pace* Bulleid and Gray at, e.g. *M.L.V.* **2,** 159 (bottom) and 167 (top). These two statements reveal the observations, which lie behind the regular statements that the clay of "hearths" or "floors" was hard-baked or burnt. Bulleid and Gray's failure to realise that the features they very accurately observed had a natural explanation is fundamental to what I believe to be their misinterpretation of "hearths" and "floors".

14 This pottery was plain, but some sherds had bead-rims, burnished surfaces, and sand-tempering.

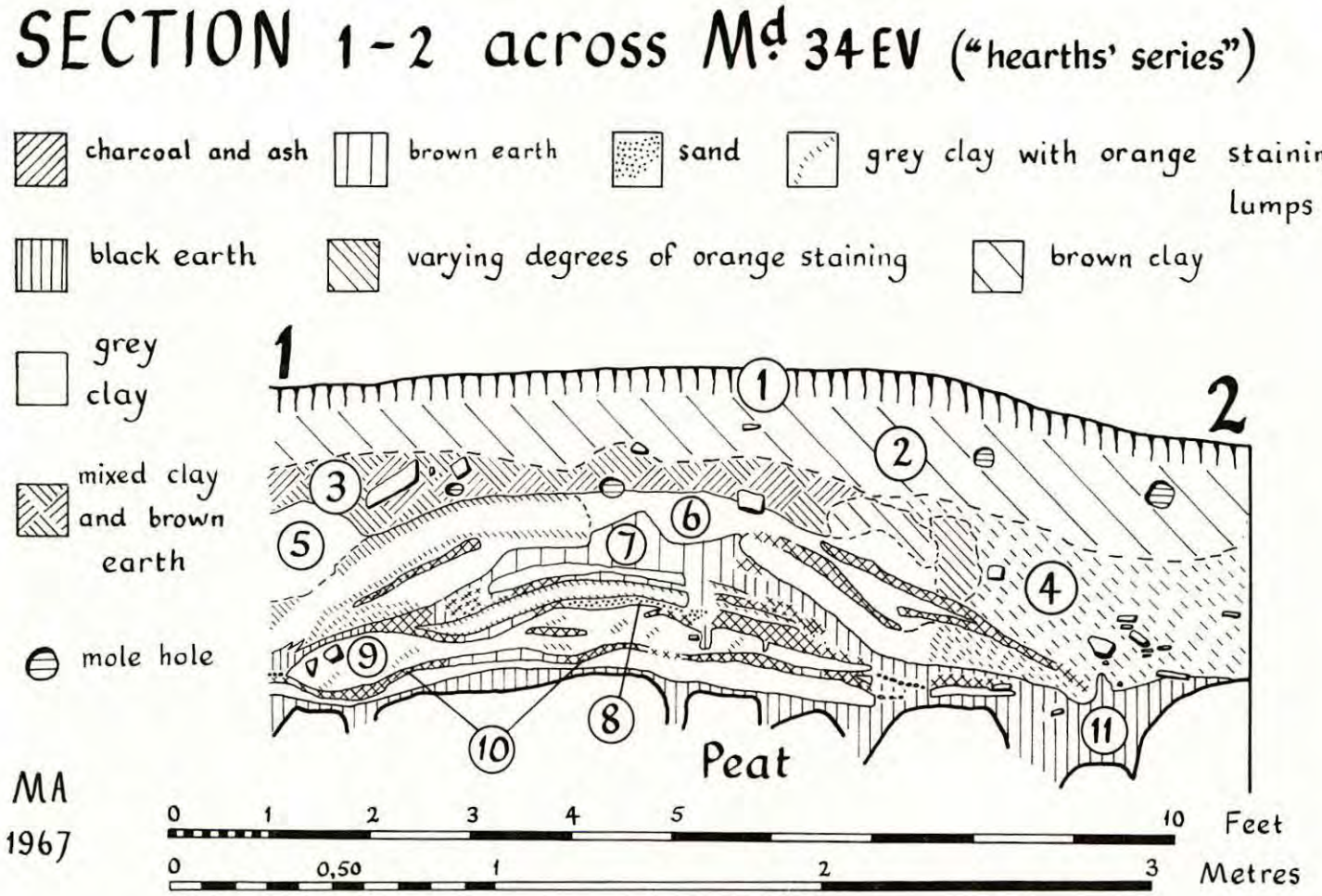

FIG. 4 MEARE EAST 1966: section 1 - 2, as marked on Fig. 2, across mound 34 EV.

Numbered layers are:

(1)	dark grey-brown turf	Modern	
(2)	brown clay	Recent flood-clay	
(3)	mixed grey and brown clay and earth	Village 3 or 4?	
(4)	grey clay with much orange staining in lumps		
(5)	light grey clay		
(6)	grey clay		
(7)	brown earth with much orange staining, in lumps, and charcoal	Village 2	
(8)	yellow and orange sand		
(9)	grey clay with orange staining, in lumps		
(10)	charcoal in black earth	Village 2	
(11)	soft fine black earth	Village 1 or 2	

Finds mainly from charcoal and black and brown earth.

4. the clay was soft, not hard-baked; while this is not conclusive evidence that the clay was never baked, it is certainly not evidence that it had been baked.

There was in 1966 no stratigraphical connexion between mound 34 EV and the other two mounds. However, discussion below (p. 32) of the results of the excavation of the western group of mounds suggests that the "superimposed hearths" belong to a separate phase, after the wooden houses (Village phase 1) but before the clay "floors" (Village phase 3).

VILLAGE PHASE 3:

Various larger dumps of clay with small quantities of charcoal and rubbish formed mounds 35 and 36 EV. In the western and eastern groups of mounds, in general, stratigraphical distinctions in the clay "floor" layers cannot be used to subdivide this phase 3 into sub-phases that correlate exactly between the different mounds; these sub-phases must be treated as of different dates, potentially at least, in different mounds.

In 1966, while mound 36 EV showed three subdivisions of phase 3 (3a, 3b and 3c), mounds 35 EV and 38 EV showed fewer. Mound 35 EV showed only two subdivisions, and it was not clear how these should be correlated with the subdivisions of mound 36 EV. Mound 38 EV, the low clay spreading off to the north-east in Cuttings A and B, appeared to overlie the charcoal layer of phase 3b in mound 36 EV (Fig. 3); while in the south-west (Cutting F) a low layer of clay appeared to be of Village phase 3a. These two subsidiary spreads of dumped clay extended into unexcavated areas, and their function was not clear.

The dumped clay was characteristically a dark to medium grey colour, with greater or lesser degrees of staining, orange-brown or orange-yellow, often present as lumps or patches of granular substance, and becoming more pronounced in colour as the section dried out. The staining was greater in the upper layers and, sometimes, in the top of a grey layer. This is explicable as a purely natural phenomenon, the result of oxidization of the surface of a gley-horizon.[15] The Recent flood-clay, covering the whole area, did not have this pronounced gley character, but was dark to medium brown-grey or buff all through.

VILLAGE PHASE 3A:

Clay was dumped to cover a large and irregular area: the surface of this clay was uneven, but it was not high-mounded.[16] In this were buried in mound 36 EV two large timbers, roughly split to shape.

VILLAGE PHASE 3B:

In mound 36 EV there was upon this clay a layer (7) of charred wattling, peas and grain, covering patchily a roughly circular area twenty feet across (Fig. 2). One sherd of pottery (plain, worn, sand-tempered) and two decorated bronze objects (a terret ring

15 Where the rising and falling of a water table produces an alternation between water-logging and drying-out in a clay layer containing iron compounds, the iron oxides in the lower, more frequently water-logged, part of the layer form as grey-blue *ferrous* oxides (FeO), because of the reducing conditions, forming a "gley-horizon"; in the upper part, to which oxygenated rain-water percolates more readily through hairline cracks in the drying clay, the iron oxides form as orange or red *ferric* oxides ($Fe_2\ 0_3$), because of the more oxidizing conditions. Further details are given in Cornwall, 1958, pp. 87-9 and 106. Roughly similar profiles occur in various areas of the Levels in soils of the Gley group (Avery, 1955, pp. 51-62).

16 This clay is the "lower clay" on the plan, Fig. 2; the unevenness of its surface is shown on the section, Fig. 3, by layer 8.

and a strap joiner) were found in layer 7. There were no reliable signs of postholes,[17] nor were there vertical wooden posts penetrating the clay below; thus it is not at all clear what structure, if any, this wattling would have belonged to, nor that the structure stood *upon* this mound rather than nearby.

VILLAGE PHASE 3C:

Upon this in mound 36 EV was a further layer of dumped clay (6) with no sign of occupation upon it. The lower clay of mound 35 EV appeared to have been piled higher with mounded clay at some date, but no marked difference between this mounded clay and the lower clay was seen, only a slight change in colour; there were no black earth or charcoal layers representing occupation. It is possible that this clay was all dumped here at once, together with the lower clay spread, in Village phase 3a.

VILLAGE PHASE 4:

Scattered over most of the area excavated (excluding the higher parts of the mounds) was a thin band of finds, with no accompanying soil layer, but lying on the clay, and immediately covered by the shell layer of Roman phase 1: bone (very much broken), fragments of worn pottery,[18] a simple La Tène 3 fibula with unpierced catch-plate, and one very worn coin. Mr. D. F. Allen has kindly identified the coin as North French, a billon coin (perhaps a quarter-stater) of the Coriosolites.[19] This gives a date *post quem* for the next phase, Roman 1, of very late first century B.C. or early first century A.D.

There was no sign of structures of phase 4, and clearly the area dug in 1966 had become the "Corporation rubbish tip" for the village by this phase. Occupation was, therefore, presumably going on nearby. The length of phase 4 is impossible to determine.

VILLAGE PHASES (GENERAL):

The attribution of finds to phases was possible only where separate layers were stratified below, between or upon dumped clays. Around the area covered by dumped clay, all finds came from one layer, soft black earth upon the hard peat surface. There was pottery from this layer very similar to that from Village phases 1, 2 and 4, and clearly the rest of the finds from it also accumulated over several centuries. Unfortunately, the majority of the rich finds came from this mixed layer: several La Tène 3 fibulae, one involuted La Tène 2 fibula with decorated foot plate, blue glass beads, a blue glass armlet with yellow and white glass inlay, shale objects and several spiral bronze finger-rings. These, therefore, cannot from the stratigraphy be assigned to any of the phases of the Village occupation 1 to 4.

ROMAN PHASE 1:

Immediately upon the rubbish scatter of Village phase 4, with no intervening earth, was a layer of mussel shells, extending all over the site except for the tops of the mounds (Fig. 3). Many of the bi-valve shells were still closed, showing that these were not food refuse, but mollusca that grew and died here in wet conditions. This flood may offer a reason for the final Iron Age abandonment of the site: it correlates well with the first century A.D. wet phase identified by Dewar and Godwin (1963, p. 45 and Fig. 10) in the

[17] Of those planned as possible posts on Fig. 2, none were convincing, and several were very dubious indeed.

[18] Some sherds were plain, some decorated with "Glastonbury" styles, one sherd may have been from a ribbed "Durotrigian" bowl. Most of this pottery was sand-tempered.

[19] Class V: current, in good condition, in the hoards in the Channel Islands of the fifties B.C.

peat stratigraphy of the Somerset levels. This shell layer appears to be widespread in the Meare Pool area, lying on top of the peat and underneath the flood clay (Avery, 1955, p. 61).

ROMAN PHASE 2:

The upper six inches of the clay of mound 36 EV was originally not distinguished from the flood clay, since it lacked the orange staining of the dumped clay of the mound; after three weeks drying, however, it bleached whitish and cracked very differently from the flood-clay.[20] It is not clear whether this bleached clay was a separate layer laid upon the upper clay of mound 36 EV, or whether its colour and texture are the result of weathering and leaching out of salts from the bottom part of the flood-clay.[21]

If the bleached clay does represent a new occupation, after Roman phase 1, it will correlate well with the "causeway" of lias blocks found in the 1932-56 excavations;[22] this overlay the shell layer, here noted by Bulleid and Gray, underlay the buff flood-clay, and was associated with third and fourth century A.D. coins and late Roman pottery. All the Roman pottery I have examined from Meare appears to be late, and there is no samian: no Roman pottery was found in 1966. Thus the Recent floodings that finally covered the area with flood-clay should be dated to the fourth century A.D. or later. Godwin (1955, p. 170) adduces evidence that this brown or buff freshwater clay which covers the area of Meare Pool is markedly later than the Romano-British marine transgression. It is not impossible that the date of this brown clay at the Meare Village[23] is contemporary, at least in part, with the marine transgression, when fresh water may have been dammed back in Meare Pool, but it does seem more likely that the brown clay is recent riverine flood-clay.

DISCUSSION

Work is continuing on the implications of these results, but a few suggestions can be made. They have specific reference to Meare, and their relevance to the Glastonbury Village is a quite different question, not treated here: there are clear similarities in the appearance of the structures at the two sites, but Godwin's peat sections (1955, pp. 178-181) show that Glastonbury was built on a wetter peat base than Meare, and it would be wrong to assume that what is true of Meare is therefore also true of Glastonbury. The area dug in 1966 was small — less than one per cent of the total area dug to date at Meare. Thus these suggestions are based on very little evidence compared with Bulleid and Gray's long experience of the site, and their established interpretation. However, since they entail a revision of these accepted views, they are propounded here, in the hope that further work at the site will support or disprove them.

1. As Godwin has already noted (Godwin, 1941, p. 120, and Dewar and Godwin, 1963, p. 39), the village was not set up in a lake, but on raised bog peat, dead and already

20 Cracking with fine cracks, and splitting into small lumps; whereas the flood-clay, not bleaching, cracked with wide cracks into large lumps.

21 The bleached clay forms the layers marked 4a and 4b on Fig. 3. The line of division between these sub-layers is very subjective.

22 *Proc. Somerset Arch. Soc.*, **81** (1935), 256-7.

23 Godwin's critical boring, GO IX, is on the northern side of Meare Pool, opposite to the Lake Village, and one and half miles from this Village.

perhaps desiccated, between the Meare and Westhay Island and Meare Pool. There is no evidence, either, that the village was surrounded by water, and the first sign of flooding is not till Roman phase 1. However, as Godwin's peat stratigraphy (1955, p. 176-7) immediately across the R. Brue (600 yards from the Iron Age village) shows, Meare Pool came close to Meare "Lake Village": its margin probably lies in the next field, 200 yards or less from the eastern group of mounds, and it may have been open water during the occupation of the village. This "Lake Village" should therefore perhaps be restyled a "Lakeside Village".

2. The character of the "substructures" found in the excavation of the western group of mounds also needs careful re-examination. It is probable that some at least were timbers buried by a natural growth of peat, and any occupation they represent considerably preceded the Iron Age village. Several points are worth noting:

(a) In 1966, the surface of the natural peat was originally interpreted as blocks of "placed peat", cut and laid to form a foundation; this idea was later rejected, and all timber below that level was finally accepted as natural and unworked.

(b) At least eighteen out of forty in the western group of mounds (e.g. mound 31 WV) showed a stratigraphy, from top downwards, of (i) mound clays, (ii) black earth, (iii) "placed peat", (iv) timber "substructure", sometimes (e.g. mound 21 WV) with interspaces filled with peat. If in these mounds also the "placed peat" was the desiccated surface of dead bog, then these "substructures" will have been buried beneath the natural bog surface, not laid to form a crannog.[24]

3. The sequence of the circular wooden house structures of the excavations in the western group of mounds, of the "superimposed hearths" or rubbish tips, and of the "clay floors" or large areas of clay, needs to be discussed, since it is suggested above that these should be of successive phases, respectively Village phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3.

Firstly, from the stratigraphy clearly noted by Bulleid and Gray, it is clear that "superimposed hearths" consistently preceded "clay floors". Bulleid and Gray drew a clear distinction between "clay hearths" and "clay floors" as separate features, and they were surely basically right in this observation, even if their further interpretation of them as hearths on which fires were built and as floors of dwellings is, as I suggest, mistaken. The "superimposed hearths" were all stratified either *under* the "clay floors" or else upon very small "clay floors"; in the latter cases, these small "floors" should probably be reinterpreted as part of the "superimposed hearths", not as "floors" of the same sort as the higher "floors".[25] Only in the case of mound 22 WV (*M.L.V.* **2,** p. 150) is there an example of an apparently later "series of superimposed hearths", between sizeable "clay floor" layers; and here the series A appears to be the result of dumping of later "clay *floors*" on the uneven surface of "hearth 5".[26]

24 The 1968 excavation (below, p. 38) showed that the "substructure" was indeed buried under a natural growth of peat.

25 Fourteen apparent examples of "series of superimposed hearths" occur in the western group of mounds: in mounds 7, 8, 9, 13, 22, 24, 26, 29, 33, 34 (with at least four series). Mound 7 has "hearths" laid upon a very small "floor"; mound 26 is wholly composed of very small "floors", and ought to be reclassified as a "series of hearths".

26 The 1966 section, Fig. 3, shows the unevenness of the "clay floor" layers.

Secondly, the circular wooden house structures should precede the "superimposed hearths".[27] In the western group of mounds, there were only six, or just possibly seven, circular wooden house structures evidenced by vertical posts or "piles".[28] In each case, a large area of the centre of the house was occupied by a "series of superimposed hearths", and the black earth and rubbish around these.[29] Other "series of superimposed hearths" did not have any circle of wooden "piles" round them,[30] while the area within and around mound 34 WV is dotted with "series of superimposed hearths",[31] The large areas occupied within the circular houses by these "hearths" and the mounds of refuse round them, particularly in the case of mound 34 WV, make it unlikely that Iron Age farmers, whom we know to have practised the habit of removing rubbish out of their dwellings,[32] would have tolerated living in these houses while the "superimposed hearths" or rubbish tips were there. This, together with the evidence that "superimposed hearths" accumulated outside the dwellings as well as inside, and the evidence from the 1966 excavations (above, p. 29) that the reddening which Bulleid and Gray thought to be the result of burning is explicable as a natural phenomenon, suggests that the "superimposed hearths" are rubbish tips thrown down in and near abandoned houses. They would then parallel well the normal Iron Age habit of throwing refuse into abandoned storage pits, a practice which is obviously not possible on peat.

Thirdly, this sequence has some support from the observations of Bulleid and Gray about the "piles" of the circular wooden houses and the large clay "floors" of the mounds. From the beginning, Bulleid and Gray interpreted these layers of clay as floors of houses, and interpreted tenuous traces found in the clay of these layers as the remains of wall-posts driven *through* the clay.[33] However, they illustrate no example of such a feature, and the condition of the timber found preserved firm and solid in 1966 in the lower clay of mound 36 EV (p. 29 above) suggests that such posts should have been better preserved had they been buried in the clay throughout their life. The interpretation Bulleid and Gray placed on their observation was, therefore, probably mistaken. Other observations of theirs support the view that the mounds of clay, the "clay floors", were deposited with a marked disregard of the circular wooden houses of vertical "piles": 40 mounds of clay were dug, yet, even accepting all dubious examples, only 7 circular wooden houses were found.[34] There are several possible ways in which the mounds may

27 Bulleid and Gray made no notes on the stratigraphy of these, since this is a matter of inference, not of direct vertical stratigraphy.

28 The certain examples are in mounds 8 WV, 9 WV, 13 WV, 24 WV, 34 WV; a probable example is mound 7 WV; a very dubious possibility is mound 33 WV. No very probable examples were found in the eastern group of mounds: mounds 13 EV and 15B (with 16) EV had possible but incomplete examples, and mound 28 EV revealed an arc of posts which just possibly might have been part of a house; this provides two possible and one very dubious example in 29 mounds dug.

29 It is from mounds containing these "series of superimposed hearths" that the very great majority of the finds came (in the western group of 40 mounds, the 10 mounds with "series of superimposed hearths" produced 64 per cent of the 2,600 numbered finds published); it is a natural inference that the finds were stratified in the black earth layers between and around the "hearths", as in 1966. In a number of instances, Bulleid and Gray specifically state that numerous finds came from these layers (e.g. *M.L.V.* **2,** 123-4: mound 9 WV).

30 These are mounds 22 WV, 23 WV, 26 WV, 29 WV and 33 WV.

31 Of the 13 "series of superimposed hearths", drawn sections are published of three: mound 7 WV (*M.L.V.* **2,** Fig. 19, p. 117), mound 22 WV (*ibid.*, Fig. 36, p. 150), mound 29 WV (*ibid.*, Fig. 44, p. 163). Photos of the sections of two others are published: mound 8 WV (*ibid.*, Pl. XXVII, f.p. 124) and mound 9 WV (*ibid.*, Pl. XXVIII, f.p. 128).

32 To throw it into rubbish pits or abandoned storage pits.

33 See *M.L.V.*, **1,** 11.

34 Bulleid himself was conscious of this difficulty: see *M.L.V.* **1,** 11.

have been house sites while still not producing wooden "piles", but I think none are satisfactory:

1. that vertical posts were driven into the surface of the mounds only to a very shallow depth, and the resultant postholes escaped notice: Bulleid, recognising that no structures as large as the houses that were found could have been stable with such shallow foundations, suggested wigwams (*M.L.V.* **1**, p. 11). This suggestion is impossible to disprove, but we now know that British house-builders had long progressed beyond such structures;[35] and even if we accept that wigwams were built on the mounds at Meare, they would be structures so different from the roundhouses published from the site that they would offer no positive support for the view that these roundhouses were also built upon the mounds.
2. that the houses had walls of unbaked clay, which have collapsed to form the clay mounds: if the mounds were formed in this way, one would have expected to find a saucer-shaped pile of clay with a depression in the middle; in fact, the clay mounds were highest in the centre, and thin round the edges.
3. that wall posts were consistently pulled up; it is then surprising that no satisfactory postholes were found in the careful search in 1966 or in Bulleid and Gray's excavations.[36]
4. that Bulleid and Gray overlooked large numbers of piles. This is frankly incredible.

We may conclude that these arbitrarily placed dumps of clay have nothing to do with the occupation of the circular wooden houses. This allows acceptance of the sequence propounded here: circular wooden houses (Village phase 1); rubbish tips (Village phase 2); clay mounds (Village phase 3).

It is in fact very difficult to see that there would be any point in living here on "dwelling-mounds" as Bulleid and Gray conceived them. The desiccation of the peat had provided a firm living surface before the mounds were dumped, for the mounds are not recorded as having sunk into the peat as they did at Glastonbury; thus the clay does not seem necessary as a "foundation". If the idea was to raise the floors above an area liable to floods,[37] then it would seem much more sensible to move to the lias clay bedrock of the Meare and Westhay Island, only two or three hundred yards away. This Island is several feet higher than the mound tops and can hardly have been crowded out.[38] If the idea was to gain defence against enemies by having a marsh around the village, it seems again more in accord with Iron Age practice to move to Meare and Westhay Island, which would also have been surrounded by marsh, and to build an earthwork defence there; no such earthwork has been identified. As a separate defensive site, the Meare Iron Age village would have been useless once Meare and Westhay Island had fallen, since invaders would then group on the Island to attack across only

35 Almost 1,000 years previously: see Avery and Close-Brooks, forthcoming, on the round house at Shearplace Hill, Sydling St. Nicholas, Dorset.

36 Bulleid himself discounted this possibility of pulling up of posts (*M.L.V.* **1**, 11). Bulleid and Gray were, of course, well aware of what post-holes were: *M.L.V.* **2**, 173.

37 There is no evidence for a flood until a later date anyway.

38 Its minimum extent, over 500 acres, is best seen on the soil survey map (Avery, 1955), where it is shown by the area of soil of the Evesham series; this arable soil has formed on the Lower Lias bed-rock in the area which was never covered by flood-clay even in the Middle Ages. The Ordnance Survey maps, giving contours only at 50 feet vertical intervals, do not show the Island clearly.

two or three hundred yards of marsh; the hard surface of the desiccated peat would mean that this would involve only wading through water. We may therefore conclude firmly that the clay dumps were not house floors, but have some other function, even while this function is completely obscure.

4. The three main phases of pottery found (plain coarse; plain burnished; decorated), though tenuously evidenced in 1966, parallel well in profile and fabric the unpublished and unstratified pottery from the earlier excavations. Probably this unstratified pottery can be used to fill out the character of the pottery of the different phases, but the greatest caution has to be exercised about chronology, as so little was found stratified in any phase in 1966.

5. The phasing can serve as the basis for a new chronology of the earlier work. Much more work must be done on this problem, especially as it is not clear that the clay mounds were all dumped down at the same time; but it is already clear, for instance, that the La Tène 1 fibula can be placed in Village phase 2 (mound 9 WV) of this sequence;[39] while of the stratified examples of La Tène 3 fibulae, three appear to belong to phase 3 or 4, two to phase 3, and only one definitely belongs to phase 1 or 2 of its mound.[40] Thus the down-dating of La Tène 1 at Meare, compressing it into the first century B.C., can be abandoned, and a more normal chronology can be adopted. Mound 39 WV shows that the dumping of clay in Village phase 3 did not start until La Tène 3, at least in some parts of the western group of mounds.

6. The re-interpretation of the "superimposed hearths" as rubbish tips (see above, p. 27) removes the implication that a complete sequence of occupation right through the later Iron Age has been revealed at Meare to date. As hearths, these series would have taken decades or centuries to build up; as rubbish tips, they will have taken hours or days. What sort of industry this rubbish came from is not clear.

7. This re-interpretation leads to a similar question about the clay "floor levels" of the mounds: if these are not successive floor levels, are they just larger clay tips? It was not clear in 1966 that the charcoal layer in mound 36 EV was really the remains of a structure set on the clay of this mound, since there were no posts or satisfactory post-holes found; mound 35 EV certainly seemed never to have carried any structure. Unpublished photos of some of the mounds suggest a character very similar to that of the "series of superimposed hearths" on a larger scale.

A close examination of, for example, mound 7 WV shows that it can be re-interpreted to agree with the view that the "hearths" are tips of clay and rubbish, while the "floors" are larger dumps of clay, with black earth and ashy rubbish between them.[41]

(a) The whole of floors 1 and 6 have tilted to the west, yet no compression of the peat is shown to explain this subsidence; hearth 10 has tilted to the north; floor 8, hearth 2, has tilted to the west. This is a curious combination of different tiltings that is surely easier to understand on the "rubbish tip" theory.

(b) The floors 2 to 6 and floors 7 and 8, with their hearths 1 to 6, should be all one high rubbish tip, with a fortuitous break where black earth (very variable in depth) is piled on floor 7.

39 EE 9 WV: *M.L.V.* **2**, 206 and Pl. XLV (f.p. 205).
40 Village phase 3 or 4: EE 4 WV, 5 WV, 10 WV. Village phase 3: EE 12 WV and 13 WV. Village phase 1 or 2: EE 22 WV, from mound 39 WV.
41 See *M.L.V.* **2**, 116-9 and Pl. XXVI and XXVII.

(c) The area of clay to the east of mound 7 WV, stratified beneath floors 1 to 6, but with a "hearth", should surely be a tip contemporary with "floors" 7 and 8.

(d) There were no posts found associated with the upper floors (i.e. floors 1 to 6), though they were found *round* the lower floors and hearths; the clay floors 7 and 8, and their hearths (and more especially the black earth and charcoal and the refuse in this) occupy such a large area, and are so high-mounded, inside the ring of these posts that they would surely have been excessively inconvenient if they had existed while the house was being lived in.

8. If the "superimposed hearths" are really rubbish tips, then the character of Meare is much closer to that of other Iron Age settlements than has been thought. For the rubbish tips parallel well the rubbish pits of chalk, limestone and gravel sites, once mistakenly supposed to be pit-dwellings. This suggests that what has been dug so far at Meare represents in part the "pits" of a standard Iron Age village; houses contemporary with these "pits" would have been grouped near them, and still remain to be found. In 1925 when trenching took place *between* the western and eastern groups of mounds in a search for a causeway, pottery of all classes known from the mounds was recovered from this moundless area, together with quantities of grain. Few further details are known, but the existence of structures here remains very possible.

9. The distinctly separated phases at Meare, and the suggestion that only part of the occupied area has in fact been dug, allow intercalation of important but missing phases between those known. Thus it is not necessary to assume that the decorated pottery of Village phase 4 was contemporary with the wheel-thrown pottery of, for example, Dorset. Allowance must be made for the possibility of a gap in the Meare sequence here: the inhabitants may well have moved the 300 yards to the lias outcrop which forms Meare and Westhay Island.

10. Finally, and most importantly, the plotting of the piles *only* from the Bulleid and Gray excavations (Village phase 1), separately from the clay "floor" layers, reveals a totally different pattern of settlement from that suggested by Bulleid and Gray. In place of forty densely packed houses the plan is of five certain and one dubious house, surrounded by tenuous traces of wooden-fenced "farm yards".[42] The full implications of this, in the light of, for example, air photo sites such as Dorchester Dyke Hills (Allen, 1938), remain to be worked out.

Summary

If all the revised views suggested above should prove correct, what picture emerges of the history of the site? In the first phase, in the third century B.C., a small number of round wooden houses were built on peat that was by then desiccated and relatively firm, probably as an extension of a settlement on Meare and Westhay Island. There seems to have been little or no need or attempt to build a substructure of crannog type at this time. Finds that can be definitely assigned to this phase are very few, and we can get little idea of the life of these people.

42 The layout suggested by Bulleid and Gray is given at *M.L.V.* **2,** 108. A similar plotting of "piles" only suggests a like pattern of houses and enclosures at Glastonbury L.V., contrasting with the plan at *G.L.V.* **1,** 45.

After some time, in the second century B.C., the area was abandoned, and the families that had lived there may well have moved back on to Meare Island; where they had lived became instead a midden in this second phase, where refuse from as yet undiscovered houses accumulated for some length of time. It is from this midden material that the great majority of the finds from the Meare Village comes, and from them a picture can be built up of a settled community practising farming, growing grain and probably keeping herds and flocks, weaving on a sizeable scale, and rich enough either to support craftsmen themselves, who provided glass beads, decorative bronze brooches, shale rings and a few iron tools, or to import these objects from outside.

Then, in the third phase, the area was turned into a clay dump, when hundreds of tons of clay were tipped upon it to form the mounds which are still visible in these fields. Where this clay came from is obscure; the purpose of the clay is even more obscure.

People continued to live nearby in the fourth phase, in the first century B.C., for scraps of bronze trinkets and of the characteristic decorated pottery of the "Lake Villages" were scattered over the tops of the mounds. The houses these people lived in still need to be found.

Finally, the first clear evidence of flood appears in the first century B.C., and we may suppose that the inhabitants were, at least temporarily, restricted to the dry land of Meare and Westhay Island. Some re-occupation took place in the third or fourth century A.D., but no clear picture emerges yet of what this amounted to.

The outstanding problems deserve to be mentioned briefly too. Perhaps the first to strike one is the question of the place of origin and the purpose of the clay, which forms, in terms of bulk, much the most outstanding feature of the site: were there clay-pits nearby, and, if so, where and why? A second problem is the site of the houses of Village phases 2, 3 and 4: if these have not so far been found, where were the inhabitants living during the periods of the village when we can reconstruct so much about their livelihood?

But perhaps the most important question is that of the industries the villagers were engaged in: it is the wide range of remains of these industries which makes Meare a site so much richer than others, and the prospect of finding out more about how these industries were carried on in the Iron Age that offers the greatest potential. Pottery-making and weaving were carried out at Meare on a large scale in phases 2 to 4: where and how? Glass-making, bronze-working, shale-working, iron-smithing may all have been done here: where are the furnaces and workshops? What was the economic basis, in terms of arable crops and pastoral herds, of this specialization of industry: how did the village grow rich enough to afford these things? These are the questions which the excavations at Meare allow us to pose: they are to date unanswered.

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MEARE LAKE VILLAGE EXCAVATIONS 1968

Further excavation took place in July and August 1968. Three areas were opened in the western group of mounds (see *Meare Lake Village*, **1**, 2, Fig. 1: the excavated areas all lie within the black patch marking the West Village). Area 1 was a mound in field C; area 2 was an unmounded area in field B; area 3 was a re-examination in a small area in field D of the timber-work "substructure" already opened by Dr. Bulleid and Mr. Gray.

The mound in area 1 revealed no house structure, but produced bone and pottery refuse from its successive dumps of clay, which were in places interleaved with charcoal layers. The surface of the mound appeared always to have been markedly dome-shaped, and would have been quite unsuitable for a dwelling-floor.

In extensive trial trenches in the flat area 2, the Recent flood-clay was removed by machine, and the black earth and peat surface examined by hand. Flooding prevented the completion of this work. No vertical posts were found, but a widespread scatter of pottery and bone showed that there had been occupation here. There was a marked difference in the character of the pottery from areas 1 and 2; area 1 produced mostly decorated pottery (some of which was found under the clay of the mound), while area 2 produced overwhelmingly plain coarse pottery.

Area 3 lay near Mound 13 WV (see *M.L.V.* **2**, Pl. XXIX, facing p. 132), to the south-east of the direct line between c.p. no. 1 and c.p. no. 2. Here were found parallel timbers, mostly very soft birch logs, with a few similar timbers laid upon them at right angles. At least one plank with a joint hole was found, apparently re-used from an earlier structure; the timbers had obviously been selected and laid deliberately in position. A layer of brushwood immediately underlay these timbers. In a few places the previous excavations had not reached down to the timbers, and here they were covered with up

to 20 cm. depth of black peat, which appeared to be natural. Bulleid and Gray interpreted this peat as artificially laid (*M.L.V.* **2,** 135 top). We took monoliths of peat for pollen analysis and wood samples for Carbon 14 dating. If the peat is natural, then these timbers should be considerably earlier than the Iron Age village; they cannot be a 'foundation' for that village, and should be compared rather with the Bronze Age and Neolithic trackways of the Levels. No other finds came from the timbers in 1968.

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