Field test centre at Castrol Technology Centre, Pangbourne, Oxfordshire

An Interim Report on an archaeological excavation for Castrol International

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

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INTRODUCTION
This report describes the results of an archaeological excavation carried out on behalf of Castrol International, Pangbourne, Oxfordshire. The excavation was required as a consequence of the results of an archaeological evaluation of the site (Howell 1995). The evaluation was carried out as a part of the process of gaining planning permission to construct a new field test centre comprising a range of workshops, office and test buildings on the site, in accordance with the policies of the Secretary of State as set out in Archaeology and Planning (PPG16, 1990). The excavation was implemented to a specification agreed with Mr. Paul Smith Principal Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, who advises the local planning authority.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
The site lies immediately adjacent to the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM Oxon 190) Bozedown Camp. Bozedown Camp itself covers an area of some 28.5 hectares and is a large hilltop enclosure of Iron Age date. A 1.2 m. wide trial trench was dug across the rampart and ditch to the north-east in October 1953, producing Iron Age pottery (layer 5,3), a fragment of shale bracelet (Layer 5), Medieval pottery (layer 6) and a 16th century iron blade (layer 9) (Wood 1954). Its univallate defences are partly ploughed, as is the interior, and the rampart is best preserved in woods to the north west where the bank survives up to 2.1 m. above the interior of the enclosure. A possible counterscarp bank survives in places outside the ditch. The excavation area lies within 5 m. of the western perimeter of the enclosure ditch. In addition, the evaluation trenches
of Bozedown camp. The ditch was 3.20 m. wide at the top and 1.40 m. deep, U shaped with clear stratigraphy (7-8 layers). Two, one metre wide slots (slot A and slot B) were hand excavated across the linear while at the far north-east end of site a small segment of the ditch against the baulk was removed by machine but proved to deep to investigate safely by hand and no further work was carried out in that section. In all slightly more than 20% of the ditch was excavated. Five sherds of Bronze Age pottery were found from four layers (52,56,57,59), two sherds were from the primary fill (57). A flint flake was also found in layer (60). Of most interest in the stratigraphy was a layer containing much charcoal and burnt flint (54,61). It would appear that this layer was specifically dumped in the partially silted up ditch.

It had been suggested from the evaluation the there was evidence of a ploughed out counter-scarp bank. This would seem to be plausible as just to the east of the ditch was a ridge of gravel from which a fair depth of subsoil up to about 0.30 m. thick spread westwards over the ditch gradually thinning out across site until it was non-existent. This layer was stripped in spits to observe whether there was any evidence of features cut into it but there were none.

There was also evidence of possible ploughing or some other activity in the form of strip marks in the middle of the site, but there was no means of dating these features. In the evaluation some possible post holes were noted but it would now seem clear that what was revealed were the ends of these strips marks.

FINDS

Pottery by Steve Ford

A small group of pottery comprising five sherds were recovered during excavation of the ditch. The hand made sherds were mainly small, were fairly poorly fired, and had reduced interior surfaces and cores. One sherd retained carbo-
(Cotton and Frere 1968), and Mam Tor, Derbyshire (Coombs 1971). Recent carbon dates obtained from Rams Hill confirm a Middle-Late Bronze Age date for the enclosure (Needham and Ambers 1994).

If the deposits at Bozedown are indicative of a precursor to the hillfort, then the burnt deposit in F4 may represent removal of earlier structures in preparation for the construction of the hillfort proper.

There are several theories relating to the function of these hilltop Bronze Age enclosures. It has been suggested that, especially when associated with linear earthworks, they represent elements of a pastoral economy (cf. Bradley et al. 1994). The development of enclosures of defensive proportions in the Early Iron Age (hillforts) may be a response to increased warfare (Bradley 1984, 134), or social changes relating to the centralisation of agricultural practices and storage of foodstuffs. The increasing size and ostentation of the hillforts may also be related to status or territoriality (Cunliffe 1990), or possibly even a link between food production and ritual (Bradley et al. 1994, 149-151).

A similar sequence of events involving the development of a Bronze Age hilltop enclosure into a hillfort proper may be represented Bozedown, although the necessarily limited excavations here are hardly conducive to exploring this idea in detail.

REFERENCES


Figure 1. Location of site within Oxfordshire.
Figure 3. Bozedown Hillfort, Whitchurch, Oxfordshire

CTCP95
Figure 4. Plan of excavation.
Figure 5. Sections.
Plate 1. Castrol Technology centre. F4, north-facing ditch section

Plate 2. Castrol technology centre. F4, ditch section looking East.