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The Regional Pattern

by Mark Corney and Andrew Payne

The hillforts of Wessex: their morphology and environs

by Mark Corney

Introduction

The methodical study of Wessex hillforts has its origins in the late 19th century and opening two decades of the 20th century and, with the notable exception of Pitt Rivers' excavations at Winkelsbury, Wiltshire (Pitt Rivers 1888), initially developed as a non-intrusive survey tradition. Given that this volume is presenting the results of non-intrusive methodologies it is worth pausing to review the development of this tradition in Wessex. Although the late 19th century marks the main starting point for investigations, any review must acknowledge the contribution of the superb surveys produced by Philip Crocker on behalf of Sir Richard Colt Hoare. These plans (Fig 3.1) are a remarkable and accurate record of many monuments, including hillforts (Colt Hoare 1812, 1819). They frequently depicted major hillforts and their environs thus presenting the first 'landscape' plans specifically executed to record the extant archaeology.

Pitt Rivers was certainly aware of the importance of recording surface features and the Cranborne Chase volumes contain many plans of his sites prior to excavation (eg Pitt Rivers 1888). In addition he also had scale models produced of many sites that depict the condition of the monument prior to excavation (Bowden 1991). Pitt Rivers' assistants, most notably Herbert Toms, were to develop this analytical survey skill further (Bradley 1989).

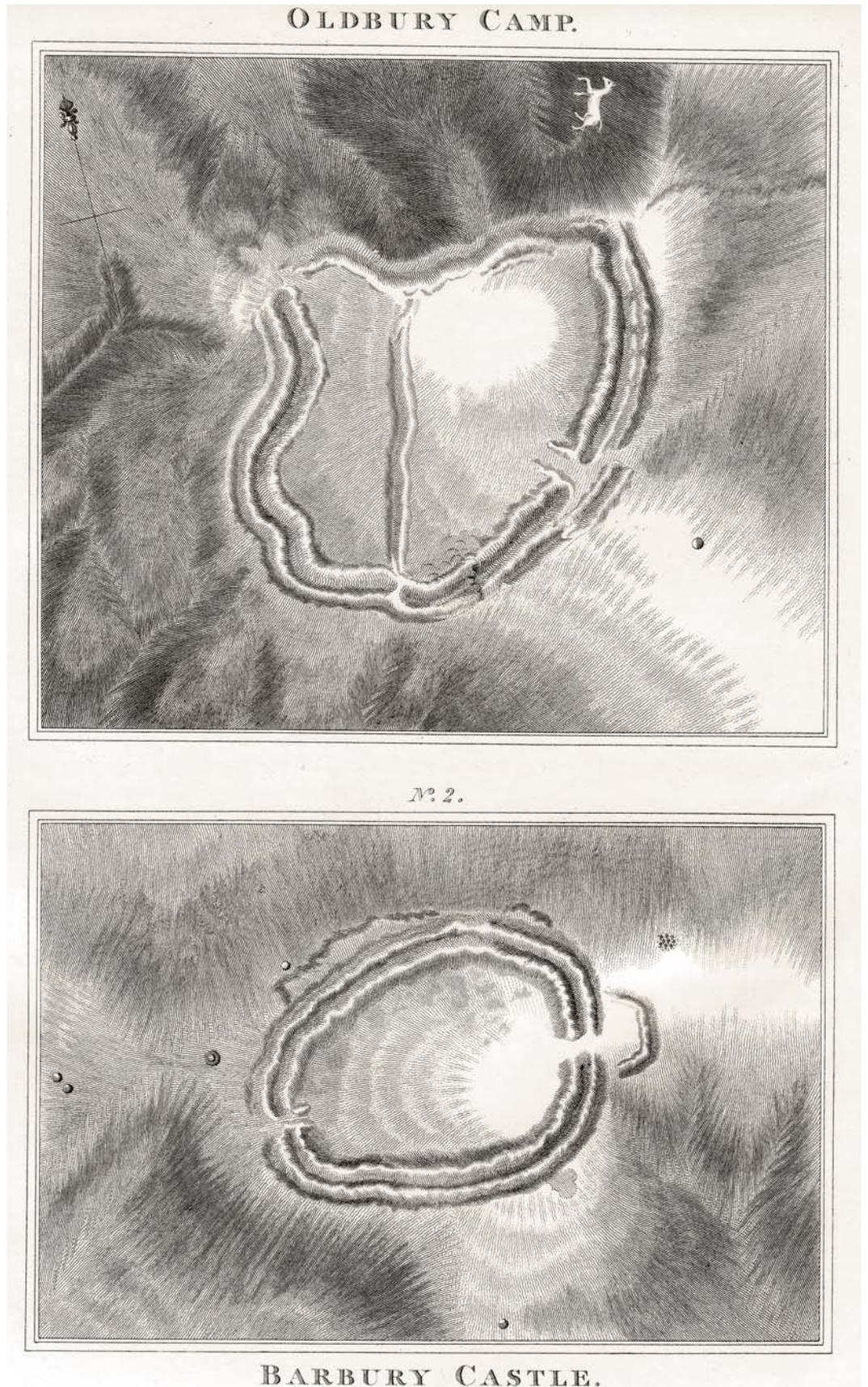
Earthwork depictions of most of the hillforts in the Wessex region to a common specification were first produced by the Ordnance Survey for the first edition 6-inch and 25-inch maps (Crawford 1955; Phillips 1980). In the opening years of the 20th century a small number of fieldworkers began to produce larger-scale, divorced surveys of many Wessex hillforts. In 1908 Allcroft published *Earthwork of England*, and of particular interest are the investigations of Heywood Sumner and J

P Williams Freeman. Both worked primarily in Hampshire, although Sumner also extended his survey work into neighbouring southern Wiltshire and Dorset. His pioneering survey of Cranborne Chase (Sumner 1913) resulted in the presentation of plans produced to a very high standard of draughtsmanship that had a profound influence on the graphic style of the early RCHM surveys in West Dorset. (These were largely produced during the 1930s but, owing to the outbreak of the Second World War, were not published until 1952.) Williams Freeman published surveys of many Hampshire hillforts (1915) and although his graphical style did not match that of Sumner, he provided an important record of many sites as they appeared 100 years ago (*see* for example the section on Norsebury, pp 66–71).

This auspicious start to non-intrusive investigation was to prove something of a false dawn as the emphasis began to move rapidly to hillfort excavation. In Wiltshire Maud Cunnington, assisted by her husband B H Cunnington, investigated a number of hillforts (Cunnington 1908, 1925, 1932a, 1932b, 1933; Cunnington and Cunnington 1913, 1917) as well as the important Early Iron Age settlement at All Cannings Cross (Cunnington 1923). In Hampshire it was C F C Hawkes who took the lead in hillfort excavation, investigating St Catherine's Hill (Hawkes *et al* 1930; Hawkes 1976), Buckland Rings (Hawkes 1936), Quarley Hill (Hawkes 1939) and Bury Hill (Hawkes 1940). Hawkes' excavations in Hampshire were to be central to his 'ABC' scheme for the British Iron Age (Hawkes 1931, 1956, 1959). Southwest of our study area, in Dorset, Sir Mortimer Wheeler and his team examined a number of major hillforts at Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943), Poundbury (Richardson 1940) and Chalbury (Whitley 1943).

The growth of aerial photography in archaeology in the decades following the Second World War had a profound impact in the region. The potential of this method had already been demonstrated by Crawford and Keiller (1928) but it was not until the formation of the Cambridge University Committee for Air Photography and,

Fig 3.1
The surveys of Oldbury and Barbury Castle published in 1812 by Sir Richard Colt Hoare in his Ancient History of Wiltshire, Volume 2 (from NMRC Library – The Ancient History of Wiltshire, Volume 2, North Wiltshire, Plate VIII, pages 40–41, originally published 1812, re-published 1975).



somewhat later, the Air Photography Unit of RCHME that the intensity and complexity of the later prehistoric landscape in Wessex could be fully appreciated. Collin Bowen (1975, 1978) began the elucidation of this landscape by using the results of air photography and ground survey. Building upon this came a landmark study with the publication of a major air photographic study of the Danebury environs (Palmer 1984). Using only air photographic sources, an area of 450 sq km was mapped at a scale of 1:10,000 with select windows at 1:5000 and 1:2500. This study set a new standard in air photographic analysis of extensive relict landscapes that has been repeated since over many areas of the country (eg Bowen 1990; Stoertz 1997).

In addition to pure air survey, multidisciplinary extensive projects within Wessex using air photography, earthwork survey and geophysics were undertaken by the former RCHME (now part of English Heritage). Studies of southern Wiltshire (NMR archive) and Salisbury Plain (McOmish *et al* 2002) demonstrate the level of detailed analysis attainable by these means and were instrumental in stimulating further projects (eg Bradley *et al* 1994).

The morphology of Wessex hillforts

The main morphological characteristics of the hillforts of the British Isles have been examined in detail by numerous authors in recent years (eg Cunliffe 1991, 312–70; Forde-Johnston 1976; Hogg 1975). These studies looked at the phenomenon of hillforts from both national and regional perspectives. In Wessex work has continued at a number of levels; ranging from major projects involving large scale excavation, such as at Danebury, to intensive non-intrusive survey utilising multi-disciplinary methodologies. Among the latter there have been a large number of earthwork and air photographic surveys that have added both a considerable amount of detail and important observations that, until now, have remained largely unpublished. The following section is largely based upon this work.

Location

The choice of hillfort location cannot be considered as a random decision. The correlation between hillforts and earlier monuments is well known – even though there is still considerable debate on the significance of this corre-

lation. Whatever the undoubtedly complex factors behind the choice of location might have been, there were clear preferred locations within the landscape and strong regional trends can be discerned over much of the area covered by this study. There is a tendency to view Wessex hillforts as part of the classic chalkland prehistoric landscape. However, even a cursory glance at the map of Wessex hillforts immediately shows that the great majority are located on the limits of the chalk, either on the escarpment edge or overlooking the major valleys such as the Avon, Test, Kennet and Wylde. Only a relatively small number are within the main chalk massif and even here it is possible to discern preferred locations in certain regions.

It must be stressed that many of those sites grouped together below have had little if any modern excavation and the detailed chronology is far from clear. It will be seen, though, that there are certain common links in the morphology of these groupings. Obviously none of these sites will have existed in isolation; the other components of the environs of those hillforts examined by this project, and noted in the preceding section, must be borne in mind (*see also* pp 139–41).

Escarpment locations

There are two major groups occupying north-facing escarpments:

The Ridgeway/Marlborough Downs Group

The largest group within this category is located on the north-facing escarpment of the Berkshire Downs and Marlborough Downs – along the route of the ‘Ridgeway’ – comprising ten hillforts: Blewburton Hill (Harding 1976), Segsbury, Rams Hill, Uffington Castle, Hardwell Camp, Liddington Castle, Chiseldon (a ploughed out univallate site known only from air photographs (*see* Fig 2.53) and Barbury Castle. The latter three also overlook the junction between the Og Valley and the northern chalk escarpment, allowing easy access from the chalk massif to the upper Thames Valley. Beyond Barbury Castle there is a gap in the Avebury area and then two western fringe outliers of the group: Oldbury and Oliver’s Camp.

North Hampshire Escarpment

This group comprises six hillforts and overlooks the middle reaches of the Kennet Valley with extensive views to the north. The westernmost outlier of the group, Forest Hill near Marlborough, is possibly a Late

Iron Age construct (Cunliffe 1991, 153; Corney 1997) while the remainder; Walbury, Beacon Hill, Ladle Hill, Bowry Walls and Winklebury occupy the main escarpment edge set back some distance from the Kennet Valley.

Smaller scarp edge clusters can be discerned in a number of areas. The north-western escarpment of Salisbury Plain in the Warminster area has four hillforts – Scratchbury, Battlesbury, Bratton Castle (McOmish *et al* 2002) and Cley Hill – forming a discrete cluster. At the eastern end of the Vale of Pewsey Martinsell Hill and Giant's Grave dominate the south-facing escarpment.

River Valley Foci

In Wessex a number of the major river valleys act as notable foci for hillfort locations. This applies to four principal river systems and their tributaries: the River Test in Hampshire, the River Avon in Hampshire and Wiltshire, the River Stour in Dorset and the Frome and Piddle in Dorset. Of these the Stour and the Avon have the greatest concentration of hillforts and associated landscapes.

The River Avon in Hampshire and Wiltshire

The River Avon and its tributaries, in particular the River Wylye, has the largest and most coherent group comprising 25 hillforts and the major emporium at Hengistbury Head (Cunliffe 1987) where the Stour and the Avon flow into the English Channel.

Along the lower stretches of the Avon, east of the river and on the fringe of the New Forest are four small univallate enclosures: Castle Hill, Castle Piece, Gorley and Frankenbury (Smith N 1999). Upon entering the chalk the hillforts along the Avon become more frequent and are often of larger proportions: Castle Ditches, Whitsbury (Bowen 1990; Ellison and Rahtz 1987), Clearbury, Woodbury (Bersu 1940; Brailsford 1948, 1949), Old Sarum, Ogbury (Crawford and Keiller 1928), Heale Hill, Vespasian's Camp (RCHME 1979, 20–1), Casterley Camp (McOmish *et al* 2002; Cunnington and Cunnington 1913) and Chisenbury Trendle (Cunnington 1932b). Along the River Wylye, north-west of the confluence with the Avon are Grovely Castle, Bilbury ring, Stockton (Corney 1994), Yarnbury (Cunnington 1933), Codford Circle, and then Scratchbury, Battlesbury and Cley Hill (the last three also being on scarp edge locations – *see above*). West of the Salisbury confluence, along the valley of the

River Nadder are Chiselbury (Clay 1935), Wick Ball Camp, Castle Ditches (Tisbury) and Castle Rings (Donhead). North-east of the confluence with the Avon, the high ground overlooking the valley of the River Bourne has Figsbury Ring (Cunnington 1925; Guido and Smith 1982), the major complex on Boscombe Down West (Richardson 1951) and Sidbury.

The River Stour, Dorset

The Stour and its tributaries host a number of major hillforts and, by way of the Blackmoor Vale, give access through to the southern edge of the Somerset Levels and the two large and impressive Wessex fringe hillforts of South Cadbury (Barrett *et al* 2000) and Ham Hill (Dunn 1997). The main concentration of larger hillforts along the Stour Valley is between Hengistbury Head and the Blandford Forum area, effectively defining the southern and western limits of Cranborne Chase with its distinctive Iron Age Settlement pattern (Barrett *et al* 1991). This group comprises Dudsbury, Spettisbury (Gresham 1940), Badbury (Crawford and Keiller 1928), Buzbury, Hod Hill (Richmond 1968; RCHM 1970c) and Hambledon Hill (RCHM 1970b). Beyond Hambledon Hill, where the valley broadens out into the Blackmoor Vale, are smaller hillforts at Rawlsbury and Banbury Hill (RCHM 1970c). Close to the source of the Stour and also situated on the south-western extremity of the Wiltshire chalk lies White Sheet Hill, a multi-period prehistoric focus of comparable complexity to Hambledon Hill.

The Frome and Piddle, Dorset

This is the smallest of the river foci in Wessex, having five hillforts within the catchment area: Bulbury (Cunliffe 1972), Woodbury (RCHM 1970a), Weatherby Castle (RCHM 1970c), Poundbury (Richardson 1940) and Maiden Castle (Sharples 1991; Wheeler 1943). The latter is the only hillfort in Dorset to have had an intensive study of its immediate environs (Sharples *ibid*).

The River Test, Hampshire

The valley of the River Test is the easternmost of the major valley foci in Wessex. Beyond here the Itchen and Meon valleys have but one major fort apiece, St Catherine's Hill (Hawkes *et al* 1930; Hawkes 1976) and Old Winchester Hill (Chapter 1, this volume). The Test and its

tributaries flow from the heart of the Hampshire chalk into Southampton Water and have 13 hillforts within the catchment. The largest in terms of area enclosed and complexity are north of Stockbridge: Ashley's Copse, Woolbury, Danebury, Bury Hill, Balksbury, Tidbury Ring and Norsebury. South of Stockbridge and beyond the southern limit of the chalk are other smaller and poorly understood sites: The Walls, Tatchbury, Toothill Camp, Dunwood Camp, Lockerley Camp and Holbury.

Further observations on location

One curious grouping observed in parts of the region is the occasional pairing of large hillforts in close proximity to each other. In some cases the benefit of excavation has indicated support for the model put forward by Cunliffe that sees one monument abandoned while another continues to develop and become a multivallate or developed hillfort. This is clearly the most likely case in the Dorchester area with Poundbury and Maiden Castle. In other areas the evidence is not so clear cut and the possibility of an earlier manifestation of the pairing of sites seen in parts of Wessex (Barrett *et al* 1991; Corney 1989) in the Late Iron Age should not be discounted. Of especial note are the close proximity of Hambleton Hill and Hod Hill in Dorset, Battlesbury and Scratchbury in Wiltshire, and Martinsell Hill and Giant's Grave also in Wiltshire. It is of passing interest to note in the cases of Hambleton Hill and Scratchbury that both hillforts enclose Neolithic causewayed enclosures, as does Maiden Castle.

Observations on the Ridgeway and Avebury Environs grouping of hillforts

The hillforts of the Ridgeway and Avebury Environs grouping were the main focus of investigation during the first season of the survey programme in 1996. The sites are arranged approximately equidistantly in a linear fashion along the escarpment edge of the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs, coincident with the route followed by the Ridgeway giving rise to the frequently used term 'Ridgeway hillforts'. Based largely on their even distribution but without the backing of reliable dating evidence, it has been contended that the Ridgeway forts represent largely contemporary centres of adjacent territorial blocks (Cotton 1962), in which case they might be expected to exhibit similar densities and character of internal occupation. One of the specific aims of the Wessex

Hillforts Survey was to test this theory further by attempting, through non-destructive means, to determine if the sites do in fact contain recurring patterns of spatial organisation. Like the Danebury Environs Project before it, the Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project (Gosden and Lock 2003; Miles *et al* 2003; Lock *et al* 2005) is now beginning to provide a more detailed chronological framework for hillfort development in the Ridgeway area, which will help to resolve some of the fundamental archaeological questions concerning the group. It is encouraging to observe that all of the Ridgeway hillforts are currently under stable grassland management regimes, some formerly having been under arable cultivation. The present sympathetic management of the sites is likely to stay in place for the foreseeable future, with beneficial effects for the preservation of archaeological features contained within them (many of which have been revealed for the first time by the geophysical surveys). In some cases the increased knowledge of the hillforts derived from the geophysical programme has acted as a catalyst for improving the management of the sites. The cultural resource value of many of the sites had previously been largely ignored owing to the paucity of knowledge of their internal character. This had led to the misconception that there was little of archaeological interest surviving or worth preserving within the continuously ploughed sites.

The hillforts of the Ridgeway exhibit considerable differences in size, ranging from the largest at Segsbury Camp (Letcombe Castle) with an internal area of some 12ha, to the smallest enclosure of 1.2ha at Alfred's Castle. As well as the varying size of the areas enclosed by the Ridgeway forts, there are also obvious differences in the layout of the defensive circuits. More often than not the ground plans reflect the particular topographical position of the site, but some sites also exhibit more elaborate defensive architecture than others in the form of the entrances, the presence of additional outworks screening an entrance and multivallation of the ramparts. Univallate sites with an internal bank fronted by a ditch and an outer counterscarp are the most common defensive arrangement in the Ridgeway group (illustrated by Uffington and Liddington for example). Other sites are multivallate for part of their circuit, such as Segsbury and Oldbury (generally to reinforce sections of the defences with less of a natural terrain advantage that can be

approached over level ground or to provide a more impressive symbol of strength or status visible from the main avenue of approach to the hillfort). In some cases (for example at Barbury and Segsbury) there is limited evidence for earlier pre-hillfort enclosures removed or built over by the later defences (*see* for example Bowden 1998) or remodelled and extended enclosures (for example Oldbury and Alfred's Castle). Barbury shows the greatest elaboration of the group having completely bi-vallate defences (the product of successive phases of construction) and a defensive outwork screening the approach to the eastern entrance. Segsbury has an outward projecting hornwork shielding the eastern entrance and yet another variation on entrance reinforcement is present at Oldbury, where a northerly extension of the second outer rampart screens the eastern entrance preventing a direct approach and creating an extended corridor to the entrance, which itself is deeply inturned.

The varying approaches adopted for entrance augmentation at the hillforts of the Ridgeway and the Avebury Environs have clear parallels with other hillfort sites elsewhere in Wessex. The outer rampart screening the eastern entrance at Oldbury uses exactly the same technique employed at the eastern entrance of Hod Hill in Dorset (Cunliffe 1991, fig14.13, 336). The possible out-curving of the main ramparts at the eastern entrance of Segsbury to create an extended corridor approach mirrors the construction of the eastern entrance at Danebury. The eastern outwork at Barbury Castle has some similarity with the one protecting the eastern entrance of Yarnbury Castle also in Wiltshire. A similar feature is also present at Chiselbury, Wiltshire. Liddington, Segsbury and Uffington all show evidence of originally having possessed two entrances – east and west – one of which was subsequently blocked. The same practice can be seen at Danebury and Beacon Hill in Hampshire and at Conderton Camp, Worcestershire (Thomas 2005). It is interesting to note that the examples of hillforts with multivallate defences in the wider Ridgeway grouping at Barbury and Oldbury retain two opposing entrances, as is also the case with other multivallate sites farther afield such as Maiden Castle (Dorset) and Castle Ditches (Tisbury, Wilts). The widespread occurrence of blocked entrances at the hillforts investigated by the project is discussed below and in Chapter 4.

Rampart Morphology

There has been a long tradition of categorising hillfort ramparts according to the nature of the circuit, construction method and the materials employed (cf Hawkes 1971; Cunliffe 1991, 313–29). This level of analysis can be based partly on surface observation, but a full elucidation of the often complex sequence of construction requires excavation. The literature on this aspect of hillfort circuits is well known and will not be repeated here. There are, however, a number of observations on the nature of hillfort ramparts that seem to have escaped attention and are especially relevant to a number of the monuments examined as part of the Wessex Hillfort project.

Detailed examination of a number of Wessex hillforts, especially although not exclusively confined to the univallate examples, reveals a geographically widespread common feature; the construction of the bank and ditch in a series of short, straight sections of relatively uniform length. Feachem (1971) noted this feature of hillfort construction in connection with unfinished hillforts but it is also visible on many complete examples. Also visible on most surviving hillforts is another characteristic feature: 'peaks' and 'troughs' along the length of the rampart tops that can be seen to correlate with similar features along the base of the ditch. Both of these traits may prove to be related to the construction of the circuits and could indicate something of the organisation of labour in the construction and maintenance of hillforts. Ralston (1996) has noted a similar trend in some of the oblong-shaped hillforts in eastern Scotland (such as Tap o'Noth, Grampian Region), where the form of the enclosure was dictated partly by the materials employed, involving the maximum use of straight lengths of timber for ease of construction.

The straight length construction form in southern Britain is most readily seen on the surviving univallate hillforts although bi-vallate and multivallate examples also display the trait. Analysis of the best surviving examples appears to indicate two main groups, each distinguished by the length of rampart unit: Group 1 with the rampart constructed in 30m to 40m lengths with the average being 32m; Group 2 featuring lengths averaging 50m.

Particularly good examples of Group 1 can be seen at Chiselbury, Wiltshire (Clay 1935), Figsbury, Wiltshire (Guido and Smith 1982), Ogbury, Wiltshire (Crawford and Keiller 1928; Hampton and Palmer 1977)

and Uffington Castle, Oxfordshire (Miles *et al* 2003). All of the cited examples are univallate enclosures of proven or probable early Iron Age date (*see* Table 2). One multivallate example within this group is Yarnbury, Wiltshire (Crawford and Keiller 1928; Cunnington 1933) where the inner and outer ramparts display this feature with remarkable uniformity around the entire circuit.

Table 2 Group 1 hillforts

<i>site</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>average unit length</i>
Chiselbury	Univallate	30m
Codford Circle	Univallate	30m
Figsbury	Univallate	32m
Grovely Castle	Univallate	32m
Liddington Castle	Univallate	35m
Ogbury	Univallate	35m
Rybury	Univallate	32m
Uffington Castle	Univallate	35m
Walbury	Univallate	30m
Woolbury	Univallate	35m
Yarnbury	Multivallate	30m

That this phenomenon is so readily apparent on the univallate examples should not come as a surprise. When certain hillforts develop into multivallate enclosures the sequence of re-modelling so clearly demonstrated by excavation can lead to a ‘blurring’ of the original configuration. Even so it is still possible to see a hint of this construction method on many multivallate or developed hillforts, such as Danebury, Hambledon Hill, Badbury and Maiden Castle.

Group 2 hillforts, where the unit length averages 55m, appear to be less frequent than Group 1, but still form a significant number of those examined as part of this analysis. Included in this group is the unfinished fort on Ladle Hill, Hampshire (*see* Fig 2.21; Piggott 1931). At Ladle Hill this pattern is remarkably clear with each incomplete unit still being separate from its adjacent components. The angularity of the changes in alignment is especially clear at Segsbury and is still a striking feature of this monument when viewed from ground level (Fig 3.2).

*Fig 3.2
Ground view of the hillfort
defences of Segsbury Camp,
Oxfordshire illustrating the
remarkably long and straight
sections of rampart out of
which the hillfort is
constructed (James Davies).*



Table 3 Group 2 hillforts

<i>site</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>average unit length</i>
Alfred's Castle	Univallate	50m
Barbury Castle	Bivallate	50m
Bury Hill 2	Univallate	80m
Casterley Camp	Univallate	45m
Chisenbury Trendle	Univallate	55m
Fosbury	Univallate	60m
Ladle Hill	Univallate	45m
Martinsell Hill	Univallate	50m
Perborough Castle	Univallate	50m
Segsbury	Univallate	70m
Stockton	Univallate	50m

It was suggested above that this unit form of construction may indicate the way in which the building of the circuit was organised. Whether this indicates discrete groups from the hillforts' hinterland contributing to the communal monument or, perhaps, a reflection of seasonal construction is of some considerable interest, but beyond the scope of this discussion. However, at two of the sites where this phenomenon is especially clear, at Ogbury in Wiltshire (Crawford and Keiller 1928, plate xxiv; Hampton and Palmer 1977, fig 7) and Perborough Castle in Berkshire it is possible that the unit lengths have been influenced by the presence of an existing field system. This is especially clear at Perborough Castle (*see* Fig 2.2; Wood and Hardy 1962) where, as at Ogbury, there are indications of settlement within the field system beyond the hillfort circuit. At Ogbury air photographs and antiquarian plans also record two smaller ditched enclosures abutting the east side of the circuit (Colt Hoare 1812; Hampton and Palmer 1977). Records in the Wiltshire SMR note Middle Iron Age pottery from these and they may well post-date the construction and use of Ogbury.

Beyond Wessex this phenomenon has also been noted on Bathampton Down, Somerset. Here a large univallate hilltop enclosure was laid out over an existing field system (Crawford and Keiller 1928, plate xxiii; Wainwright 1967). This association between rampart form and earlier field systems is not common and appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

Blocked Entrances

The blocking of entrances, especially on univallate sites at the period when elaboration of the circuit commences, is a well-

known feature of a number of Wessex hillforts. Within the study area blocked entrances have been examined by excavation at Danebury (Cunliffe and Poole 1991, 23–32) and Uffington Castle (Miles *et al* 2003) and other examples can be suggested on the basis of the earthwork evidence. At a number of sites there are common indications of such an event. This will usually take the form of a characteristic indentation in the rampart, marking where the rampart terminals of the former entrance have been infilled, and, occasionally, there will be the remains of outworks associated with the former entrance. The latter feature is especially pronounced at Danebury (Cunliffe and Poole 1991, 23–32). Eagles (1991), in a paper examining the surface evidence from Beacon Hill, Hampshire, has drawn attention to another probable example marked by a subtle change in the external ditch, and a marked increase in the height of the counterscarp where the former gap had been infilled. Other examples can be postulated on the basis of field observation.

One relatively common characteristic of univallate hillforts in Wessex is pairs of opposed entrances. Where only one entrance is now visible the observer will have a reasonably good idea where to seek evidence for a blocked counterpart. This very simple maxim has been used to identify blocked entrances at four Wessex hillfort sites and others doubtless exist. At Liddington Castle a single entrance survives on the east side of the monument (Figs 2.54–6). This is an unelaborate affair consisting of a simple gap through the defences with the bank displaying slightly expanded terminals. On the western side of the circuit, directly opposite the eastern entrance, the inner rampart has a slight inward kink and is slightly wider for a distance of 10m. The ditch narrows at this point and a gap through the counterscarp is still very evident on the ground. This feature has all the characteristics of a blocked entrance and is close to the probable junction between the hillfort circuit and a linear ditch that approached the site from the west (the precise relationship having been truncated by later quarrying).

At Segsbury, excavation of the eastern entrance has shown that it was protected by a projecting hornwork and that the existing southern entrance might have been a later opening, possibly Iron Age or Roman (Lock and Gosden 1998, Lock *et al* 2005). The form of the eastern entrance is clearly of earlier Iron Age type and it would be tempt-

ing to postulate that there was once a western equivalent. Study of the earthworks on the western arc of the circuit has produced two candidates. To the north-west there is an opening through the rampart and the counterscarp is noticeably narrower at this point. However, the fact that the inner rampart is broken at this point would tend to argue against this being an earlier entrance. A stronger candidate can be seen on the south-west where the inner rampart, ditch and counterscarp all make a characteristic kink over a length of 20m. This is also directly opposite the eastern entrance and the magnetometer survey shows a broad band with significantly fewer features running east-west between these points that could be interpreted as a former road. Additionally, immediately beyond this postulated blocked entrance, air photographs and magnetometer survey have located an area of possible occupation (Chapter 2).

Perborough Castle has suffered serious degradation to the earthwork circuit from modern ploughing in recent decades. However, the northern arc displays the characteristic inturned kink suggestive of a blocked entrance. Close examination of the earthwork also shows that the inner rampart at this point is slightly disjointed and may indicate an original entrance form with slightly offset terminals. The feature is clearly visible on air photographs (for example NMR 4229/17, SU 5278/9, 1988) and beyond the fort there are traces of a slight hollow-way beside one of the field lynchets that predate the monument.

In addition to these sites, at least seven more Wessex hillforts display convincing earthwork evidence for the blocking of entrances: Castle Ditches, Tisbury (*see above*); Chiselbury, Wiltshire; Eggardon Hill, Dorset; Grovely Castle, Wiltshire; St Catherine's Hill, Hampshire; Weatherby Castle, Dorset and Yarnbury, Wiltshire. In every case these are located directly opposite the principal surviving entrance.

Beyond the ramparts: hillforts in their landscape

The brief history of Wessex hillfort studies outlined above illustrates how, until recently, there had been a strong tendency to view hillforts in isolation. This myopia had created many problems with the way hillforts and indeed the Wessex Iron Age had been studied and interpreted. The growth in 'Landscape Archaeology' and

projects such as the Danebury Environs (Palmer 1984; Cunliffe 2000) and the large-scale mapping of extensive areas of the Wessex chalk (eg Bowen 1990; Bewley 2001; McOmish *et al* 2002) have begun to redress this imbalance and have graphically demonstrated the complexity of settlement forms and land division that coexisted through much of the 1st millennium BC. In this general discussion attention will focus upon the immediate environs of the hillforts and pay special attention to the growing body of evidence for enclosed and unenclosed extramural settlement. A more detailed discussion of the environs of those sites investigated by the project will be found in the gazetteer (pp 39–130).

The positioning of hillforts appears to be based on many complex factors that can include proximity to earlier monuments, significant points of junction between landscape divisions and geomorphological factors. The project under discussion in this volume has also added valuable corroboration to observations made from the study of air photography regarding potential settlements in close proximity to the hillforts. Excavation of such sites has been all too rare, although the recent examination of an extensive settlement located on a spur north of Battlesbury hillfort in Wiltshire has demonstrated a very early Iron Age date that probably precedes the first phase of the hillfort (M. Rawlings, Wessex Archaeology, pers comm).

Air photographs show potential unenclosed settlements marked by pit clusters and maculae immediately outside and south-west of Perborough Castle (*see* for example Ashmolean Museum 7093/929 held in NMRC Swindon) and Segsbury (NMR 1703/264, SU 3884/17, October 1979). In the case of Perborough Castle these features can be seen to extend right up to the outer edge of the ploughed-out ditch suggesting that they predate the construction of the hillfort defences and its associated counterscarp. At both Perborough Castle and Segsbury the cropmark evidence was confirmed by the detection of significant anomalies during the magnetometer survey (*see* Figs 2.3 and 2.40, Chapter 2). In neither case has the settlement been verified or dated.

Martinsell Hill, a large univallate hill-top enclosure overlooking the eastern end of the Vale of Pewsey, has been shown by the magnetometer survey (pp 118–23) to be largely devoid of significant archaeological features.

On the plateau to the west of the enclosure and extending as far as the small promontory fort of Giant's Grave, some 1km distant, fieldwalking by Owen Meyrick recovered spreads of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age material (Swanton 1987).

At Bury Hill air photographs indicate a mix of enclosed and unenclosed settlement over an area of at least 4ha located 150m south-east of the entrance to the hillfort. Again magnetometry has confirmed this location and added clarity to the marks observed on the air photographs (Figs 2.14–15).

There is now growing evidence that significant extramural settlement is a common feature of many hillforts in Wessex and in the case of developed or multivallate forts this often takes the form of enclosed activity in relatively close proximity to the principal entrance.

At Yarnbury in Wiltshire a large (approximately 3ha) oval enclosure is sited 400m south-east of the eastern entrance of the developed hillfort. Although unexcavated, pottery of 3rd–1st century BC date was recorded when the site was damaged by road widening in the 1970s (Wilts SMR). This material is contemporary with the ceramics recovered from the interior of the developed hillfort during the 1932 excavations (Cunnington 1933).

Still in Wiltshire, air photographs held by English Heritage at the National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC) in Swindon show oval ditched enclosures of approximately 1.5ha outside the hillforts of Battlesbury and Scratchbury. In the case of the former this is situated approximately 300m beyond the eastern entrance of the hillfort on the low spur giving access to the monument. Although undated, the form of the enclosure is typical of other later prehistoric examples in this part of the county. At Scratchbury, only 1.5km south-east of Battlesbury, another ditched enclosure occupies a similar spur-end position some 200m beyond the north-east entrance of the hillfort. Aerial reconnaissance is playing an important role in the identification of these extramural enclosures and unenclosed settlements. At Grovely Castle, another hillfort along the Wylde Valley (and in the same locational group as Yarnbury, Battlesbury and Scratchbury), an enclosure of approximately 2ha has been located in close proximity to the entrance. Farther west, along the Nadder Valley in the Vale of Wardour, another enclosure of approximately 3ha has been discovered some 500m from the western entrance of Castle Ditches, Tisbury.

At Old Sarum in Wiltshire casual finds and limited observation and excavation have recorded Iron Age material of the 4th century BC to early 1st century AD over an area of at least 10ha beyond the eastern entrance (conveniently summarised in Borthwick and Chandler 1984). Owing to the circumstances of discovery it is impossible to ascertain the exact nature and full extent of the occupation, but both enclosed and open settlement seems probable. There are similar records of extensive spreads of later Iron Age material outside the principal entrance to Badbury in Dorset. This spans the 3rd century BC to early 1st century AD and includes an area that developed into a small shrine in the Romano-British period (M Papworth pers comm).

The presence of these clusters of extramural activity appears to have been largely ignored and yet they must surely represent another potentially important component of a hillfort landscape. To date these patterns appear to have relatively discrete distributions, with a notable concentration in close proximity to the hillforts of the Wylde Valley in southern Wiltshire. Farther east, on the Hampshire chalk, this pattern has, with the exception of Bury Hill, so far failed to manifest itself convincingly. The enclosure at Houghton Down (Cunliffe and Poole, 2000e) is, at just over 2km from Danebury, too far to be considered as an example of this phenomenon. The pattern seen in Hampshire is also similar to that observed so far on the Berkshire Downs and the Marlborough Downs where, with the possible exceptions of Segsbury and Perborough Castle, evidence of potential settlements in *very* close proximity to the hillforts appears to be lacking.

There is clearly an urgent need for a carefully planned sampling strategy to obtain more information on those settlements and other features hard by hillfort entrances. Such a strategy will need to address some very fundamental questions starting with: 'are these settlements and other features contemporary with the use of the adjacent hillfort? If so, is there any discernible difference in the character of the material assemblage that may indicate a different economic/social pattern to that of the hillfort? Do these sites remain in occupation after the decline of the hillfort and if they do is there any major change in their character?' It is tempting to postulate that in the absence of any major concentrations of obvious 'high status' material from many

excavated hillforts in central Wessex that such a focus, should it exist, is not within the hillfort but immediately adjacent, on the approach to the monument. In the areas where the pattern is concentrated, the recurring location, generally within 200m and 500m of an entrance, does strongly suggest a close relationship.

Hillforts of Wessex after the Iron Age

The use of hillforts in Wessex in the Late Iron Age and beyond is an aspect that has yet to be given the study it deserves. The patterns that are discernible appear again to be both regional and chronological. The Danebury excavations show that here there is very little major activity after *c.* 100–50 BC (Cunliffe 1984a) and no evidence of Roman military activity in the mid-1st century AD. Unlike Dorset (Hod Hill, Maiden Castle), South Somerset (Ham Hill, South Cadbury) and East Devon (Hembury), none of the hillforts in the core area of Wessex have produced convincing evidence of Roman military intervention. Only at Forest Hill near Marlborough, probably part of a Late Iron Age regional centre (Corney 1997), and Bilbury Ring in the Wylve Valley is there a possibility of a short-lived Roman military presence. This lack of evidence can be accepted and in probability reflects the very different political and social attitudes in the region towards the Roman invasion in AD 43.

Evidence of non-military activity within hillforts throughout the Roman period in central Wessex is, however, plentiful even if, in many cases, the exact nature of this is still obscure. In some cases the activity is clearly domestic and the relationship to the hillfort may be little more than convenience in defining an area of settlement activity. This is surely the case at Balksbury, a Late Bronze Age–earliest Iron Age enclosure near Andover. Here an aisled building of later Roman date appears to be the focus of a small farming settlement (Wainwright and Davies 1995). At Yarnbury in Wiltshire excavation (Cunnington 1933) and surface collection (unpublished, National Monuments Record [NMR] archives) suggests the presence of a large settlement spanning the entire Roman period. At Stockton Earthworks, overlooking the Wylve Valley in Wiltshire, an early univallate enclosure develops into a major nucleated Late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement of 32ha (79

acres) that continues into the early 5th century AD (Corney 1989). A similar complex might also have developed adjacent to a nearby complex centred on Bilbury Ring hillfort and Hanging Langford Camp (*ibid.*).

Two hillforts in the project area have remarkable structures within their circuits. Tidbury Ring, Bullington in Hampshire has two substantial Roman buildings, set at 90° to each other, placed centrally within the enclosure. Known only from air photographs (for example NMRC SU 4642/6, 1948) this complex appears to be a small villa complex with an aisled building and a simple corridor house. Such a siting is highly unusual and poses questions as to why this particular location was chosen. A substantial Roman building is also known within the small enclosure of Alfred's Castle. This again appears to be a domestic structure constructed in the 1st or 2nd century and demolished in the late 3rd century AD (Gosden and Lock 1999, 2001, 2003, Lock and Gosden 2000). To seek a possible parallel it is necessary to look into the Cotswold region to The Ditches at North Cerney, Gloucestershire. Excavation here has recovered details of a simple corridor house of 1st century AD date set within a plough-levelled enclosure of hillfort proportions and dated to the 1st century BC (Trow 1988; Trow and James 1989). It is possible that Tidbury Ring may be a further example of a Romano-British villa developing within a hillfort but only fieldwork can answer this question. The Roman building at Alfred's Castle was recently excavated by the Hillforts of the Ridgeway Project during 1998–2000 (Gosden and Lock 1999, 2001 and 2003; Lock and Gosden 2000) and a detailed summary of the results is included in Chapter 2. Tidbury also has other features suggesting post-Iron Age activity. South of the hillfort air photographs show a substantial linear ditch mirroring the southern arc of the hillfort and presumably of prehistoric date (Fig 3.3). Close examination of the photographs shows a series of cropmarks that may represent an inhumation cemetery. These are clustered around a small ring ditch of approximately 5–7m diameter. There are two possible contexts for this apparent cemetery. It could be very late Iron Age and compared with Mill Hill, Deal (Parfitt 1995) or, and perhaps more plausibly, be an early pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Tidbury Ring is a site that requires a great deal of further investigation and it is to be very much regretted that



Fig 3.3
Aerial photograph of
Tidbury Ring, Bullington,
Hampshire showing linear
earthwork south of the fort
with possible adjacent
inhumation cemetery
(NMRC, SU 4642/19/16,
1976).

access for geophysical survey as part of the Wessex Hillfort Project was denied.

In the Vale of Wardour in south-west Wiltshire both surface finds and geophysical survey suggest an extensive Roman period settlement within Castle Ditches, Tisbury (pp 103–7). None of the features located by the geophysical survey resembles a temple of Romano-Celtic form and the settlement may be a largely secular one. The area is intriguing as it is one where there is good survival of pre-English place names indicating possible continuity from the Roman to post-Roman period (Eagles 1994).

In western Britain the most common occurrence of substantial Roman buildings on or in close proximity to hillforts is usually associated with a religious focus. There are numerous examples ranging from 'intra-mural' cases such as Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943), and Lydney (Wheeler and Wheeler 1932) to those in close proximity to the hillfort such as Uley (Woodward and Leach 1993) and Henley Wood (Watts and

Leach 1996). Within our study area Romano-British religious activity has been postulated at a number of examples including Uffington Castle (Lock and Gosden 1997a), Old Sarum (Corney 2001), Liddington Castle (this volume) and Oldbury (pp 123–7). Others, such as Ashley's Copse on the Wiltshire-Hampshire border, are also likely candidates.

The phenomenon of post-Roman reoccupation and refortification of hillforts is, like reuse as a religious focus, best known in western Britain. Here, hillforts such as Cadbury Congresbury (Rahtz *et al* 1992), South Cadbury (Alcock 1995, Barrett *et al* 2000) and Ham Hill (Burrow 1981) have all produced good evidence of reoccupation. The nature and character of this activity is still far from understood but clearly involved long distance contacts with the Byzantine world as evidenced by ceramic imports. This focus on Somerset is probably more a reflection of the work of individual archaeologists such as Philip Rahtz, rather than a true geographical pattern. In Dorset there is good evidence for post-Roman activity at Maiden Castle in proximity to the Romano-British temple (Woodward 1992) and Hod Hill has produced some items of late Roman style metalwork, weapons and two 5th century AD Germanic brooches, the latter coming from the site of a Roman building just below the hillfort defences (Eagles and Mortimer 1994).

At Oldbury, Wiltshire, close to the western terminal of the East Wansdyke, a penannular brooch of probable 5th-century date is known with another example from nearby Calne (Youngs 1995). In this context the proximity of the hillfort to a major Roman villa below Cherhill village church, only 1km to the north-west (Johnson and Walters 1988) and the possibility of an extramural Romano-British temple (p 127) makes the geophysical evidence for a possible reduction of the hillfort circuit especially interesting. The proximity of major Roman structures to hillforts with evidence for post-Roman reoccupation is impressive and includes Cadbury Congresbury, South Cadbury, Ham Hill, Crickley Hill and Old Sarum.

In Hampshire, small-scale excavations by Philip Rahtz recovered post-Roman ceramics and evidence for refurbishment of the defences at Castle Ditches, Whitsbury (Ellison and Rahtz 1987). This site is in some ways comparable to Oldbury in that it is close to another probable 5th century AD boundary, Bokerley Dyke (Bowen 1990).

Such hints do suggest that reoccupation of hillforts in southern Britain may be far more widespread than hitherto thought, and to this author it would appear that it may be related to the area once covered by the former late Roman province of *Britannia Prima*. The region has a growing body of evidence for very late Roman activity in both coins and other artefacts (*ibid*) and it is here that we may expect to see evidence of a social evolution develop before the final assertion of Anglo-Saxon hegemony.

An overview of the geophysical survey results

by *Andrew Payne*

The results of the programme of geophysical surveys span a wide range and do not divide simply into clear groups. The classification of sites based on the geophysical results is to a degree a matter of personal interpretation and a range of quite different classifications are clearly possible based upon using a range of different attributes for grouping the sites. The system adopted below is based on similarities in the density, form and pattern of magnetic anomalies within the hillforts and the presence of recurrent features such as circular gully structures.

At one end of the spectrum, there are a number of hillforts that exhibit a low level of internal activity. These could be termed 'empty hillforts'. In the case of Ladle Hill this is entirely compatible with the unfinished status of the hillfort, suggested by the irregular form of the earthwork. In other cases, such results could reflect early abandonment of the site (as happened at many hillforts in the early Iron Age) or sporadic, perhaps seasonal, usage. The small hillfort of Oliver's Camp appears to represent another example of this type of site.

A second category of sites that appear to show features in common are the group known as hill-top enclosures – vast enclosures following the contours of a plateau area defined by relatively slight earthwork defences and datable to the very beginning of the Iron Age. The examples of these sites that were surveyed at Walbury and Martinsell appear to contain mainly geological disturbances or areas of quarrying with little evidence for a settlement function. Total coverage of these sites was thought to be unnecessary after this disappointing response. The internal areas were nevertheless extensively sampled.

The third category consists of sites with evidence for scatters of pit-type anomalies such as St Catherine's Hill (only sampled because of tree cover), Woolbury, Perborough Castle and Uffington Castle. In many cases distinct clustering of pits can be observed in specific areas of the hillfort – either around the perimeter of the enclosure or at the centre, often on the highest ground – but the overall quantity and density of pits is low.

In the fourth category are sites such as Bury Hill II and Barbury Castle that contain very dense and even pit distributions. This response is consistent with the stronger, more developed, multivallate earthworks defending these forts, usually indicative of continued and prolonged occupation into the Middle Iron Age and beyond or re-occupation at a late period in the Iron Age.

The fifth category includes a range of hillforts that all contain similar patterns of occupation, although the density of the anomalous activity varies. It is quite clear that all these sites functioned as settlements or at least foci of activity at one time or another because they contain zones of pits associated with small numbers of round structures defined by ring-gullies. This group makes up about a third of all the sites surveyed and therefore seems to be the most representative of hillforts in general in our sample region. It includes Segsbury Camp, Beacon Hill Camp, Liddington Castle and Oldbury Castle.

Finally we are left with two very distinctive sites that exhibit rather more elaborate patterns of internal layout suggesting an element of settlement planning and division of the internal area into functional zones for different activities. One site is more coherent as a single phased layout; the other is more suggestive of two separate distinct phases of internal arrangements.

The first site – Norsebury – contains linear sub-divisions and there is a particular concentration of occupation features adjacent to the ramparts along the western side of the hillfort, while the central area appears to have been reserved for a large circular enclosure of unknown date and purpose but possibly a shrine. Complex entrance features are indicated by the magnetometer in the ploughed-out section of the hillfort defences now clearly defined by the survey.

At Castle Ditches the site is occupied by large numbers of circular structures defined by ring-gullies, with enclosures and roadways aligned on the four entrances into the fort.

The enclosures are clearly of a different phase to the ring-gullies which they appear to intersect in several places. The round structures appear to be aligned in rows suggesting an element of planning in their layout. Pits appear to be less plentiful at Castle Ditches than the round structures and enclosure features.

Small hillforts

More work needs to be done on understanding the function of smaller hillforts as the results from those included in the study were uninformative (Oliver's Camp) or complicated by later occupation (Roman in the case of Alfred's Castle and relatively recent activity at Oliver's Camp). One question that is frequently asked of such sites is, 'do they represent a different level of social organisation to the larger hillfort enclosures?' The ranking of such sites in a settlement hierarchy depends on them being permanent settlements. The evidence from Oliver's Camp suggests it was never intensively occupied, implying that there may be some functional distinction between some small hillforts and larger hillforts. In contrast, the magnetometer data from Alfred's Castle shows signs of considerable activity within the enclosure indicated by a high density of pits. Some of these have now been excavated producing a rich assemblage of Early Iron Age material suggestive of a high status site (Gosden and Lock 1999, 2001, 2003; Lock and Gosden 2000).

Other aspects of the results

The results from ploughed or previously cultivated sites (such as Norsebury Ring and Castle Ditches) were generally much clearer than those from uncultivated sites under permanent grassland. Surveying sites that have been ploughed for many years is therefore a clear advantage for magnetometer survey despite the likelihood of loss or truncation of archaeological deposits from agricultural erosion.

The grassland sites often preserve earthwork evidence for archaeological features in their interiors that can more easily be interpreted from analytical earthwork surveys of the type carried out by the former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME; now part of English Heritage). At Beacon Hill the earthwork evidence (Eagles 1991) and the evidence from magnetometer survey tie in with one

another remarkably well, but there is less of a clear match at Barbury Castle where sub-surface features are much more prolific. It is likely that the two forms of survey at Barbury are picking up separate phases of occupation and therefore providing a more complete picture of the sequence of activity in the enclosure than would be gained by using the techniques in isolation. The sub-surface features detected by the magnetometry are most likely earlier than the features visible as surface indications. The land-use history of the site and variation in past land-use across the site again plays a part in the visibility of both surface and sub-surface features – one set of features often being detectable at the expense of the other.

Notable discoveries at specific sites

Important information on specific aspects of a number of sites has also been recorded. At Oldbury a previously unknown boundary ditch partitioning the hillfort (no longer clearly visible on the ground) suggests two distinct phases of hillfort development, involving expansion or retraction of the enclosed/defended area. This may reflect several stages of fortification of the site during the Iron Age involving phased expansion of the hillfort across high ground, as is already known, for example, at Maiden Castle and Torberry (West Sussex) (Sharples 1991, Cunliffe 1976). Alternatively, it might represent a second line of defence added as a later partition of the enclosed area to provide greater protection to the core area of settlement. Such a feature has been recognised through excavation at Conderton Camp (Worcestershire), where a secondary rampart was inserted across an earlier hillfort enclosure, and the smaller area so formed occupied by a settlement, leaving an outer annex that was unoccupied (Thomas 2005). Cadbury Hill, Congresbury, in Somerset provides another example of later partition of a pre-existing hillfort (Rahtz *et al* 1992). The internal ditch at Oldbury might have functioned simply to keep out animals or to divide agricultural or other activities from habitation areas. Yet another alternative explanation for the ditch is that it represents an earlier prehistoric linear boundary running through the area later occupied by the hillfort, although it does not appear to line up with any of the known 'linears' in the area. Further magnetometer survey could be used to determine if the ditch does continue outside the hillfort.

The magnetometer data from Liddington Castle raises interesting questions about the nature of the activity within this hillfort. The singular nature and impressive diameter of the large round structure revealed by the geophysics inside the fort is suggestive of a specialised function, such as a shrine or temple. The large oval enclosure set apart from the rest of the activity in the hillfort of Norsebury may represent a similar sacred enclosure, shrine or temple site. An enclosure mapped by magnetometry within the defences of Maiden Castle in 1985 (Baalam *et al* 1991) may represent another example of this type of feature.

A group of unusual features revealed inside Oliver's Camp are thought to relate to relatively modern (possibly Second World War) activity.

Parallels with Danebury and other excavated Wessex hillforts

Based on the magnetometer survey evidence, the hillforts of St Catherine's Hill (with a central zone of pits), Segsbury, Liddington (containing discrete zones of pits with round structures), Oldbury (a moderately high pit density, but more evenly scattered, plus round structures) and at the lower end of the scale Beacon Hill (a thin scatter of pits plus round structures) all show elements of the early Danebury layout in the 6th–5th century BC.

St Catherine's Hill also shares other features in common with Danebury in the early period, such as entrance/gate structures known as a result of excavation in the 1930s. In Period 2 of the St Catherine's Hill sequence there is evidence of major reconstruction and heightening of the original dump rampart in parallel with narrowing and lengthening of the entrance passageway. At St Catherine's Hill these modifications are linked to a major change of pottery style to saucerpan pots of the St Catherine's Hill group. Similar developments took place at Danebury about 270 BC (Danebury Period 4) when the original box rampart built in the middle of the 6th century BC was replaced by a more substantial dump rampart fronted by a large V-shaped ditch and the entrance passage was also narrowed and lengthened. The first hillfort entrance at St Catherine's Hill also closely resembles Danebury Gate 2a-b (a wide dual carriage-way entrance closed by double gates) in the early period of Danebury. St Catherine's Hill shows evidence of destruction not long

after the new rampart build. Elsewhere in the region now covered by Hampshire the hillforts at Quarley Hill and Woolbury also seem to have declined after the end of the 4th century in common with St Catherine's Hill. Only Danebury continued as a major centre in the region after this decline (Cunliffe 2000, Cunliffe 1995).

Zones of dense pitting and occasional small round/oval structures also occur at Norsebury although these concentrate towards the edges of the enclosure in areas bordering the ramparts rather than the central area which seems to have been reserved for a large, circular ditched feature. The deeply in-turned, slanted entrance on the south side of Norsebury is a possible parallel with remodeled strengthened approaches through hillfort defences dating to the Middle Iron Age at sites such as Torberry, Danebury and St Catherine's Hill (Cunliffe 1991, 330–4). The eastern entrance at Norsebury also shows signs of elaboration in the form of additional projecting outworks similar in design to the south-east entrance at Beacon Hill and the blocked west entrance at Danebury.

The majority of the other sites do not seem to compare well with Danebury in its earlier phases. Barbury could correspond with Danebury nearer the end of its occupation history – along with Maiden Castle the product of cumulative phases and a long sequence of activity. The resemblance between the magnetic results from Barbury and Maiden Castle (which is well understood from excavation) is quite striking. Sites such as Perborough and Ladle Hill have most in common with emptier sites such as Bury Hill I and Woolbury (plus Figsbury and Quarley) examined during the Danebury Environs Project (Cunliffe 2000) and the smaller promontory-type fort of Oliver's Camp would fit in here too. Martin-sell and Walbury probably belong in the earliest, sparsely occupied, class of hillfort in their region similar to Balksbury in the Danebury Environs – but this is difficult to state conclusively because of geological complications – and there is a question mark over whether archaeological features are really absent. Features of an ephemeral nature such as post-holes may not be adequately resolved by the fluxgate type magnetometers and 'standard' recording intervals employed by the project.

There are other anomalous hillforts that do not easily fit in with our current understanding. These include Fosbury,

Alfred's Castle and Castle Ditches. On the basis of the paucity of evidence for activity inside it, Fosbury is similar to Woolbury or Bury Hill I – but it has elaborate defensive architecture and a suggestion of internal quarry ditches more in keeping with a developed hillfort. This may indicate that the enclosure circuit was redefined at regular intervals involving heightening of the ramparts but never actually brought into use as a fortified static community. Alfred's Castle is complicated by Romano-British occupation but appears to be a densely used, primarily early, small hillfort akin to the previously excavated site of Lidbury Camp in the east of Salisbury Plain that produced eleven storage pits in a limited area of excavation (Cunnington and Cunnington 1917; Cunliffe 1991, 348). Castle Ditches stands out on its own as an untypical hillfort in the sample of sites included in the Wessex Hillforts Survey, but is peripheral to the main area sampled and possibly belongs to a geographically distinct group with more in common with hillforts in Dorset and Somerset. If Castle Ditches does belong in this group it might have been occupied until a much later date than the hillforts farther east in what became the territory of the Atrebates in the Late Iron Age. Although defensively a hillfort Castle Ditches has, in one phase, the internal characteristics of an oppida-type settlement or 'valley-fort' such as Salmonsbury in Gloucestershire or Dyke Hills in Oxfordshire. Non-hillfort Iron Age settlement in the Danebury Environs shows considerable variety to the extent that it is difficult to discern any regular pattern. There is no reason why this variety should not extend to hillfort settlement.

Some overall conclusions

The project has revealed a wealth of new evidence for the nature of the internal utilisation of Wessex hillforts. While supporting some of the existing models of hillfort development, the surveys also show that the pattern is considerably more complex and varied than previously realised (see Chapter 4). Some hillforts exhibit a very low density of archaeological features, while others contain evidence for prolonged and intensive usage (indicated by a very high density of magnetic anomalies mapped). In some cases several discrete phases of settlement activity are suggested by the magnetic results.

The character of internal activity revealed by the magnetometer surveys can not always be correctly anticipated from the layout and sophistication of the hillfort defences, showing the value of magnetometer survey for rapidly revealing the character of occupation within a hillfort. This in turn can shed light on the likely duration of occupation and the character and intensity of past activity on the site. The case of Norsebury is a good example where the design of the earthworks at first sight would suggest a relatively simple form of hillfort, belying the complex internal activity now revealed by the magnetometer. The reverse seems to be the case at Fosbury.

Many sites that are superficially similar in terms of size, siting and rampart construction contain very different and sometimes unusual or unexpected patterns of activity. Two sites that appear very similar on the ground based on the size of the areas enclosed and the form and layout of the enclosing earthworks are Perborough Castle and Norsebury Ring but they exhibit very different patterns of occupation. Differential preservation may also have some part to play in these results but this is difficult to quantify without excavation.

The size of a site and the complexity of the defences visible on the surface are not, therefore, necessarily related to function or socio-economic complexity. The large enclosed area of Segsbury (12ha) contains a similar pattern of occupation to that observed inside the 3ha enclosed at Liddington Castle. Norsebury, enclosed by a simple bank ditch and counterscarp, displays a density of internal occupation on a par with larger sites with massive multivallate defences such as Yarnbury, Oldbury, Bury Hill II and Castle Ditches. Univallate sites can contain a similar density and complexity of internal activity as multivallate sites, but multivallate sites generally, but with the notable exception of Fosbury, contain dense internal activity.

The overall impression given by the results is that far from all hillforts were inhabited or functioned primarily as settlements. Although in some cases forts may have been constructed to house settlements perhaps when the need arose or for socio-political reasons, in many cases the sites may not have been inhabited for very long or served other purposes, leaving few detectable traces in the archaeological record. Fosbury is one possible example of this. Some hillforts were obviously centres



Fig 3.4
Aerial photograph of Conderton (or Dane's) Camp, Worcestershire, a small 1.5 hectare hillfort located on a narrow ridge between two dry valleys on the side of the upland massif of Bredon Hill (NMRC; NMR 18035/11, SO 9738/18, 1998, Crown Copyright).

of large permanent settled communities (as illustrated by the houses, streets and enclosures mapped at Castle Ditches). Others were probably only temporarily or sporadically occupied while some may have had more specialised functions possibly as religious or ceremonial centres or seasonal gathering places. The overall results of the survey allow for a considerable range of functional variability between hillforts.

The internal planning and layout of structures in hillfort interiors is highly varied. Some sites appear more organised than others. At some sites the pattern of features appears to be quite random and disorganised although nearly all sites display some clustering of activity. In other cases there is more evidence of zoned activities. One example is Norsebury, where there are zones containing a very high concentration of archaeological features in two discrete areas of the hillfort including pits, quarries and circular structures, while the remaining third of the hillfort appears much emptier. Segsbury and St Catherine's Hill both have concentrations of occupation near the centre of the site, on the highest ground, dominating the whole of the enclosed area. At Oldbury occupation is concentrated in the northernmost third of the hillfort on a steep natural promontory separated at some time by a cross boundary ditch from the remainder of the area enclosed by the hillfort.

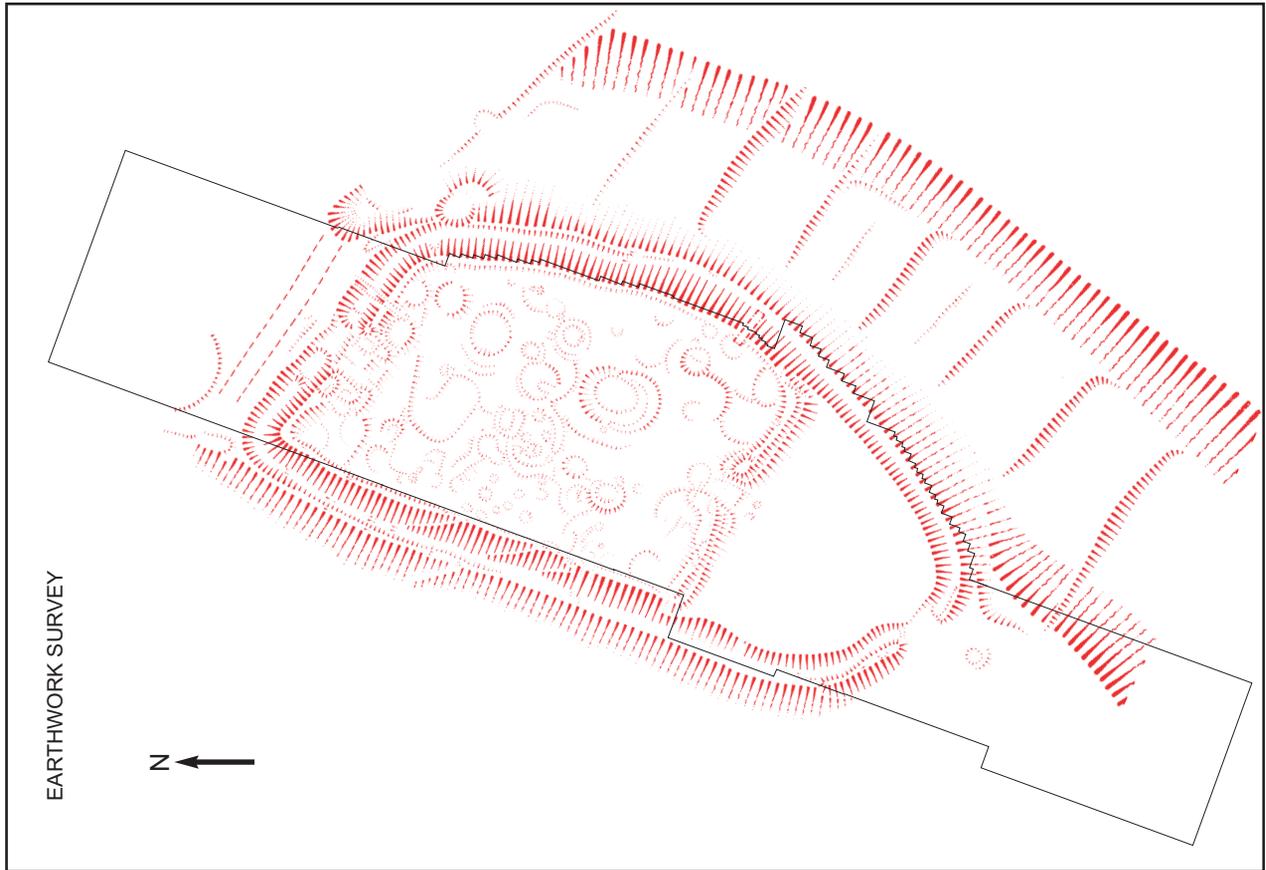
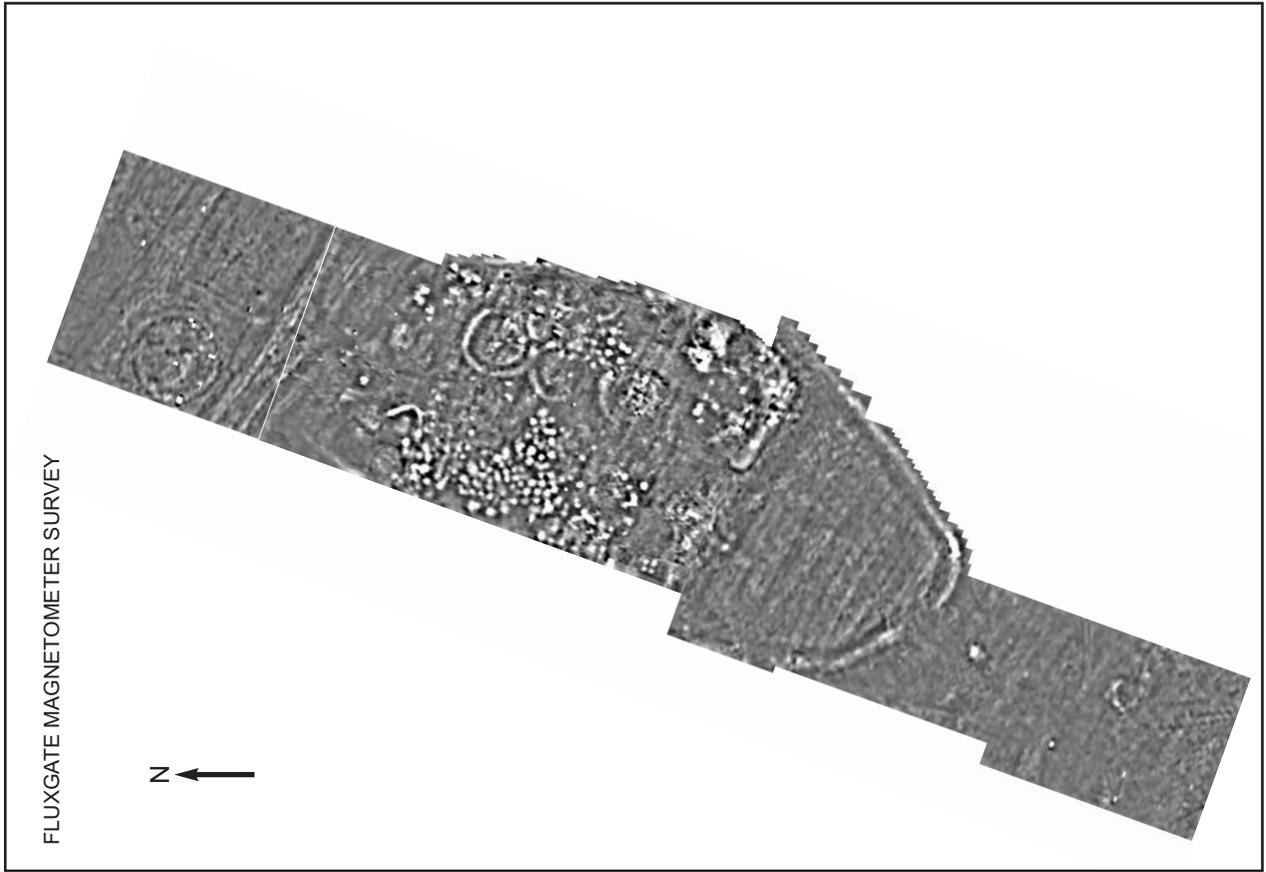
Some sites contain large numbers of pits apparently with few house sites (Liddington, Barbury and Segsbury). At others, house sites are fairly plentiful, but have few pits (Beacon Hill, Castle Ditches). Sites such as Perborough Castle appear to have only ever been sparsely occupied leaving evidence only of limited scatters of pits. Barbury Castle appears to have been the most intensively used or longest occupied of all the sites surveyed. The sheer profusion of anomalies at this site suggests numbers of pits running into the thousands.

A significant sample of the hillforts in central-southern England has now been surveyed, considerably broadening our knowledge and understanding of the sites. The more detailed information that has emerged from the project is already beginning to show the diversity of patterns of activity within Iron Age hillforts. The evidence suggests that hillforts were constructed for a number of purposes and that these purposes will have changed over time.

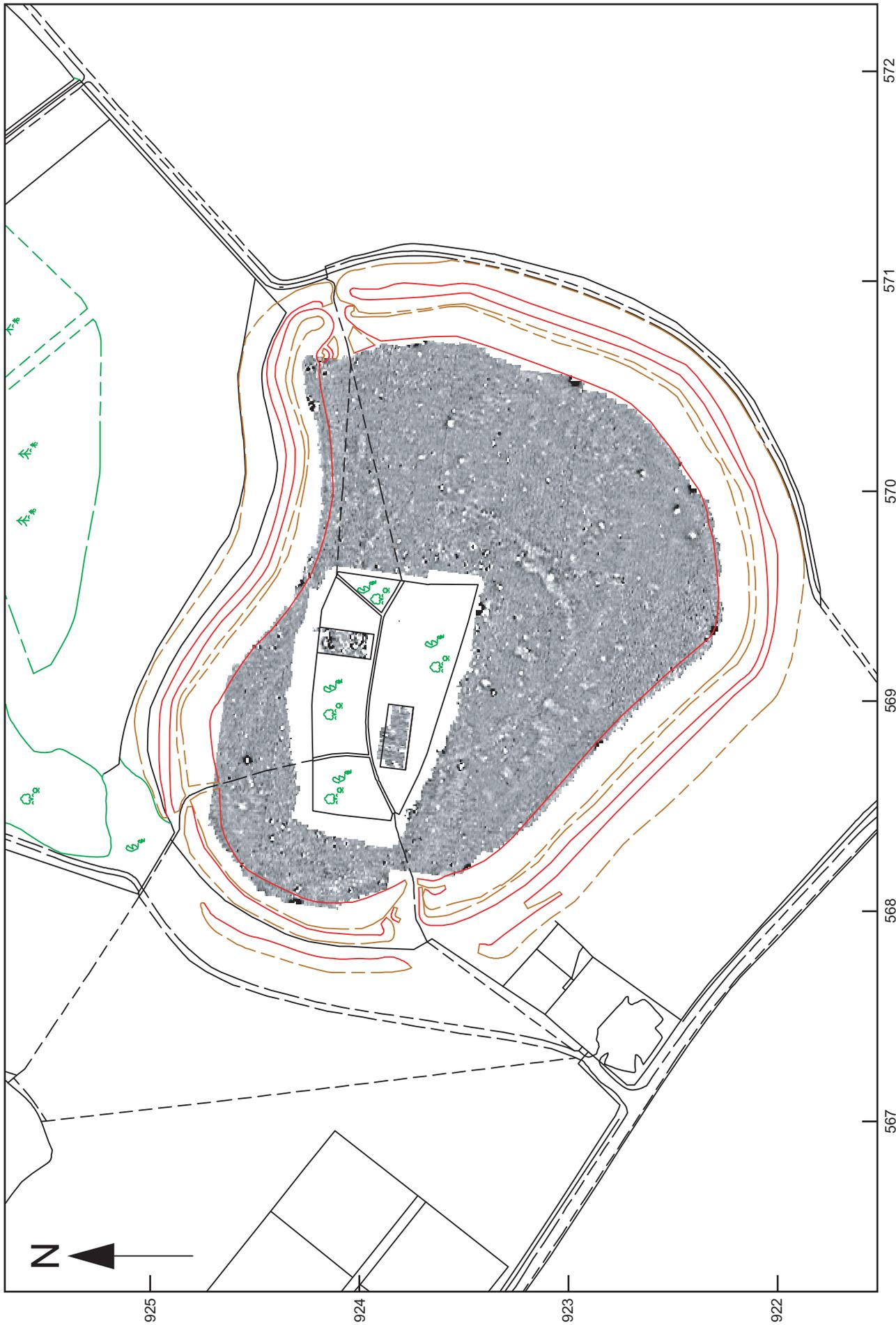
The results prove that it is not possible easily to predict the character of hillforts from surface evidence alone and therefore there is clearly justification for the continued and expanded use of geophysical methods for hillfort investigation. Preliminary results of magnetic survey from a limited number of hillforts in the neighbouring Severn-Cotswold Region (Figs 3.4 and 3.5;

Fig 3.5 (page 148)
Magnetometer and earthwork surveys of Conderton Camp showing the bi-lateral division of the hillfort into storage and occupation areas represented by distinct zones of densely packed pits and round structures. The remains of a field system survive as a series of lynchets to the east of the fort and were partially subsumed by it (Mark Corney and Andrew Payne).

Fig 3.6 (page 149)
The results of the magnetometer survey carried out inside the hillfort of Castle Hill, Little Wittenham, Oxfordshire. The newly identified inner enclosure circuit revealed by the survey is clearly visible in the plot.



CASTLE HILL OR SINODUN HILL CAMP, LITTLE WITTENHAM, OXFORDSHIRE Magnetometer Survey, June 2002



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Conderton Camp, Worcestershire) suggests that here there is considerable future promise for further expansion of our knowledge of hillforts. Recent survey within the hillfort at Castle Hill, Little Wittenham, Oxfordshire – a site overlooking the Thames Valley – has continued to demonstrate the potential, revealing the presence of a previously unknown inner enclosure circuit provisionally dated to the late Bronze Age (Fig 3.6; Payne 2002). The work of the Wessex Hillforts project has also demonstrated the complementary academic and

practical value of thematic geophysical survey aimed at a single type of archaeological site, for which there is a recognised range of management challenges and a clear research agenda.

To end with a final note of caution – we need to ask the question: does magnetometry really represent the reality beneath the ground in a hillfort? The answer, it has to be acknowledged, is probably ‘no – not totally’ based on the retrospective survey of Danebury, but if the results are interpreted with care they can still tell us much.