Excavations at Burrough Hill,
Burrough-on-the-Hill,
Leicestershire
Interim Report 2010

John Thomas & Jeremy Taylor


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Excavations at
Burrough Hill,
Burrough-on-the-Hill,
Leicestershire
NGR: SK7605 1195 centre

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Summary

A projected 5-year programme of excavation and landscape survey focussed on the hillfort at Burrough Hill began in June 2010. The aim of the work is to reassess the nature and role of this prominent monument in the light of recent research in the region and nationally, and at the same time to provide excavation training for undergraduate students. The work is being undertaken by University of Leicester School of Archaeology & Ancient History, and is jointly directed by members of the academic staff and staff from University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). The project is being carried out with the support of English Heritage, who granted Scheduled Monument Consent to excavate. Although various small archaeological interventions have taken place in the past there has been a poor record of publication and as a consequence the hillfort is little understood. The current project represents the first major excavation on the site to modern standards and the 2010 season was the first intervention since 1971.

Prior to the excavation a geophysical survey was carried out on the hillfort interior and the immediate eastern environs. Three trenches were opened during the first season of excavation; two within the Scheduled area and one without. Following the end of the excavation all areas were re-instated carefully to match the surrounding ground contours.

Trench 1 was located in the hillfort entrance and positioned to coincide with an excavation in 1960. Excavation here revealed much about the form and phasing of the main entrance and its method of construction. The ramparts were seen to have been constructed with layers of clay and locally quarried ironstone, all held in place by well-built drystone walls. Two deep post holes marked the position of large timber gate posts that may also have supported a walkway spanning the entrance. A recessed room built into the rampart may have acted as a guard chamber but could also have fulfilled other functions. Remarkably, although this room had been partially excavated in 1960, there were still surviving floors and hearths within. Tools associated with metalworking and weaving/spinning were found within the room, which according to pottery finds, appears to have been backfilled in the Roman period. Other than these few Roman sherds the dating evidence from Trench 1 indicated a broad mid-late Iron Age timespan.

Trench 2 was excavated on the northern side of the hillfort to re-evaluate the results of a small trench that had been excavated in 1971. The archaeology in this trench was well-preserved as it lay beneath a medieval plough headland that had protected the underlying remains. The northern part of the trench, adjacent to the rampart earthworks, contained extensive layers of rubble tumble which had accumulated as the hillfort gradually fell into disrepair. A refuse layer rich in Roman pottery indicated intermittent activity within this part of Burrough Hill between the 1st and 4th centuries AD. Sealed beneath these deposits were the remains of an Iron Age roundhouse and associated domestic and craft activities.

Trench 3 was located outside the hillfort earthworks on the eastern side to evaluate geophysical anomalies in this area. Although damaged by medieval ploughing the surviving archaeology, relating to a pair of roundhouses, was in relatively good condition and sample excavation yielded an assemblage of pottery, animal bone and a complete, but broken, saddle quern.
INTRODUCTION

Background (Figure 1)

Burrough Hill is the finest example of a large univallate hillfort in Leicestershire and has statutory protection as a Scheduled Monument (SM 17088). It is located on a flat ironstone promontory approximately 7km south of Melton Mowbray (SK7605 1195 centre) lying at a height of c.200m OD. The hillfort is defined by an almost continuous trapezoidal rampart of stone and turf, standing up to 3m high internally, which encloses an area of c.5ha. An inturned entrance is located on the south-east side and is formed by 2m high banks forming a passage some 45m in length. A second possible original entrance lies at the south-west corner, where the rampart bank continues downslope outside the enclosure for some 50m. The rampart contains several additional breaks, some of which are evidently the result of later activity including stone robbing. Earthwork hollows on the southern external side of the hillfort also probably reflect later episodes of ironstone quarrying. On the northern side of the monument there is a counterscarp bank 5-6m below the top of the rampart bank.

Burrough Hill appears to have earlier Iron Age origins but the exact chronology of its development is obscure (Clay 2001). Finds from the site and its environs indicate a long period of use beginning in the Mesolithic and extending to the later Roman period although concerted activity and occupation could have started in the Bronze Age or Iron Age (Liddle 1982). The interior of the hillfort, as well as fields to the south and east, were cultivated during the medieval period and were ploughed until the enclosure of the parish in the mid-17th century. Remains of the ridge and furrow earthworks are slight but still evident within the hillfort interior on a north-south alignment. The hill was also used as a fairground in the medieval period and John Leland records that it was used for games and dancing every Whit Monday. The hill saw later use for steeple-chasing by the Melton Hunt, who held races every June for a large part of the 19th century (Liddle 1983).

A small scale excavation in 1935 (not well located, but outside the eastern side of the hillfort) revealed a stone wall abutting the outside of the rampart. The area was c.36 square yards (c.33 square metres) in extent from which a relatively large animal bone assemblage was recovered, as well as 12 pottery sherds of Iron Age and Roman date (including a Nene Valley colour coat pie dish).

In 1960, excavation, proton magnetometer survey and earthwork survey were undertaken. Dr M. J. Aitken carried out geophysical survey of around half the hillfort interior, revealing concentrations of buried features mainly in the western and northern areas of the site (Thomas 1960). Several of these anomalies were partially excavated, revealing large storage pits containing animal bones, pottery (Iron Age and Roman) and Hunsbury-type querns. A contour survey was made of the main hillfort entrance before an area on the inner part of the southern inturn, together with an area to the immediate south, was subject to excavation. This revealed a cobbled road surface of several phases, the inturn wall and a probable guard-house containing hearths and enclosed on three sides by stone walls. Finds included bone and antler objects (including two bone gouges and horse bridle cheek pieces), Iron Age and early Roman pottery, two complete rotary querns, a La Tène Id iron brooch and a bone pin. The condition of the animal bone highlighted the good potential for survival of palaeoenvironmental remains within the hillfort.
A 50ft (c.15.25m) square area was excavated in the northern part of the hillfort interior in 1967 (Brown and Simpson 1968). This area was positioned to target pit-like anomalies that had been suggested by the 1960 geophysical survey. Twelve pits with various diameters and depths were examined and these lay between 0.10m and 0.25m beneath the modern ground surface. Finds included Iron Age and Roman pottery, with at least one pit containing purely Roman finds, charcoal and a quantity of animal bone. The overlying topsoil contained a large assemblage of Roman pottery representing a range of dates throughout the period as well as 3rd-4th century Roman coins.

Two further seasons of work in 1970 and 1971 examined areas close to the northern rampart, initially guided by anomalies from the 1960 geophysical survey (Thawley 1973). In 1970 a grid of square trenches encompassing an area of c. 600 square feet (c. 54 square metres) was excavated and a smaller area measuring c. 100 square feet (c. 9 square metres) was excavated approximately 13m to the south-east. In 1971 the northernmost square trench was
incorporated into a single long trench in order to examine a cross-section of the northern rampart. Finds associated with these excavations consisted mainly of 3rd-4th century Roman pottery although earlier flints of Mesolithic and Bronze Age character were also recovered.

The Current Project

Excavations were undertaken at the hillfort on Burrough Hill, Leicestershire between June 7th and July 7th 2010 in accordance with the Scheduled Monument Consent Project Design submitted by School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester to English Heritage (ULAS 2010). The excavations were jointly directed by staff from the School and from University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) with the assistance of 58 archaeology students from the University.

The excavations followed a geophysical survey of the hillfort interior and its immediate eastern environs, undertaken by Dr Jeremy Taylor and volunteers from the Hallaton Fieldwork group in May/June 2010. Further details of the results of this survey are discussed below.

The general aims of the fieldwork are:

- To lay the foundation for a new research project that will provide a case study of the structure and development of a major Midlands hillfort in its landscape context.
- To carry out trial excavation of several parts of the monument and to re-evaluate and publish evidence from the previous explorations.
- To provide training for undergraduate students, in a research-led context, in archaeological site investigation.
- To develop collaborative involvement with the local community in understanding the site and its wider landscape through archival research, training and fieldwork opportunities.
- To enhance understanding of the variable survival and quality of deposits in different contexts across the site that will aid in the future management of the monument.
- To bring to publication the key results of previous excavations on the monument in the 1930s, 1960s and 1970s.

The 2010 fieldwork sought:

- To identify and characterise archaeological deposits in two targeted excavations adjacent to earlier unpublished excavations on the site.
- To recover suitable samples for radiocarbon dating in order to establish an absolute chronology for the deposits revealed and help position the site within regional and national frameworks.
- To investigate the character, preservation and potential of all artefactual, palaeobotanical and zoological remains encountered.
- To integrate these results with a detailed gradiometer survey of the monument carried out under a separate Section 42 licence.
- To produce a detailed topographic model of the monument.
- To work with the Leicestershire County Council Community Archaeology Scheme, English Heritage, local community groups and the Ernest Cook Trust to provide open days, talks and displays about the site and ensure strong community participation.
- To produce an archive and publish a report of the results.
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

Location & Methodology

A request for a Section 42 Agreement was submitted to English Heritage for detailed geophysical survey of the Scheduled Monument prior to the start of the excavations. The surveys were conducted in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (David et al 2008) and the IFA technical Paper No.6, *The use of geophysical techniques in archaeological evaluations* (Gaffney, Gater & Ovenden 2002).

The present survey covered the interior of the extant hillfort earthworks and an area of c.3.8ha of flat open ground to the east. Both areas lie under pasture and the latter has surviving prominent ridge and furrow earthworks. The underlying solid geology of the area is Marlstone rock, a ferruginous limestone well suited to prospection by Magnetometry.

A 20m grid was established and tied into the Ordnance Survey national grid using a Topcon Hiperpro global positioning system with post-processing correction. Measurements of vertical geomagnetic field strength were taken with two Bartington Instruments Grad 601-2 dual fluxgate gradiometers. The measurements were taken in parallel traverses and logged by 20m grid square. The sample interval was set at 0.125m and the traverse interval was 1m.

Data were downloaded into a laptop using Geoplot 3 and Archeosurveyor 2 software. The latter was used to process the geophysical data and to produce greyscale images and trace plots of the raw data. A greyscale image of the data is presented in Figure 2. Positive magnetic anomalies are displayed as black or dark grey and negative as white or light grey.

**Interpretation (Figure 2)**

The survey was effectively carried out in two parts as the prominence of the ramparts on the eastern side of hillfort prevented continuous survey from the interior to the exterior. For ease of discussion the two areas are discussed separately below.

**Hillfort Interior**

The most prominent positive linear anomalies run along the northern, western and southern edges of the survey and reflect the hillfort ramparts. Similar pronounced anomalies were not seen on the eastern side as the height and steepness of the ramparts here prevented survey. It is, however, noticeable that the entrance passage ramparts, which were surveyed, do not show as a positive magnetic response. This may be because they were constructed in a different manner or using different materials to the main ramparts. Within the rest of the interior prominent but narrow linear anomalies running from north-east to south-west are indicative of former ploughing. The narrow and irregular spacing of these anomalies suggests more than one episode of comparatively modern ploughing, which explains the absence of prominent ridge and furrow earthworks within the hillfort today. Broader linear anomalies close to the southern edge of the survey are suggestive of surviving ridge and furrow in the lee of the ramparts.

Much of the rest of the interior is taken up with c.400+ positive macula anomalies. These are found in most areas though are conspicuously scarce close to the main south eastern entrance and the possible entrance to the south west. Their form, scale and number along with the evidence suggested by the earlier excavations indicate that the majority are likely to be pits.
Curvilinear positive anomalies ranging in diameter from c.6-15m are also apparent in significant numbers. Most are located close to the ramparts on the northern, western and southern sides but are conspicuous by their absence to the east. Alongside these probable roundhouses, a much smaller number of polygonal linear anomalies suggest small enclosures such as that close to the south western possible entrance. Further, sometimes faint linear anomalies in the northern part of the site also mark ditches that appear to act as subdivisions of the interior possibly with appended enclosures.

A large amorphous positive anomaly in the centre of the survey may reflect evidence for shallow quarrying of the underlying rock on the highest point within the hillfort. The likely date of this activity is unknown but is not recorded on the earliest reliable survey of the site by John Tailby in 1796. There is no obvious indication of their presence on the surface today. A far less prominent (though even larger ovoid) anomaly is visible close to the eastern rampart. This lies within a shallow depression in the ground surface that may be natural but might represent a former pond or scrape. A faint but long linear anomaly running east to west to its north heads directly towards a large break in the rampart and may represent a later drainage feature associated with this work.

Discrete dipolar magnetic anomalies representing near surface ferrous and/or fired objects are scarce except at the north western fringe of the survey where the proximity of wire fencing and nails in a wooden revetment are the cause.

**Eastern Exterior**

The prominent gently curving linear anomalies on a north-west to south-east alignment mark the well-preserved remains of ridge and furrow in the field to the east of the hillfort. To the north east, similar north-south running anomalies indicate the ridge and furrow of a neighbouring field of the pre-enclosure landscape.

A large amorphous area of prominent positive anomalies near the south-western edge of the survey marks the presence of quarries either side of the main hillfort entrance that are still visible as earthworks. The quarry to the immediate south of the entrance was still visible as an open scar in Tailby’s 1796 survey and some of the present earthworks are likely to be a consequence of recorded post medieval quarrying for road and building stone. The quarry to the north of the entrance, however, appears to predate the visible ridge and furrow suggesting that it may have been related to an earlier phase of activity possibly even having been used for the construction of the ramparts.

Immediately to the west of these quarries lies a very broad but weaker positive magnetic anomaly running parallel to the eastern ramparts. At approximately 8-10m across this is likely to represent the remains of a substantial external ditch or quarry for the hillfort. A cluster of prominent macula anomalies in the northern part of this ditch and the higher incidence of dipolar magnetic anomalies across the northern part of survey are probably the result of mortar fire in the earlier part of the 20th century. The former shell holes are visible as shallow earthworks in and around the line of the suggested hillfort defensive ditch and two examples of mortar shell fragments were recovered during the 2010 fieldwork.

Curvilinear anomalies in the south western part of the extramural survey represent further round houses and the associated small enclosures of a settlement. The settlement appears to be bounded to the east by a long linear positive anomaly that is likely to be a ditch. The anomaly strength of this feature weakens to the north as it moves away from the core of settlement but would appear to continue as a faint feature running parallel to the hillfort.
rampart and ditch. A large rectilinear anomaly appended to this boundary represents a seemingly empty enclosure with a possible entrance to the north east.

The very strong dipolar linear anomaly to the east of the survey marks the course of a modern water pipe but to the north east of it two further linear anomalies are possibly part of further ditched boundaries of a field system or enclosure extending beyond the survey.
Figure 2 A greyscale plot of the results of the Magnetometer survey
Figure 3  Location of excavated areas in 2010
EXCAVATION (Figure. 3)

Trench 1 (Figure. 4)

The main part of Trench 1 measured c.11m x 18m with an additional smaller area measuring c.5m x 5m in the south-eastern corner, amounting to c.223m² in total. The excavation was located at the western end of the inturned hillfort entrance and was positioned to coincide with the area investigated in 1960. The turf and topsoil were removed by mechanical digger under archaeological supervision. This revealed the underlying rubble core of the entrance rampart and uppermost levels of the backfilled excavation boxes from 1960. After initial cleaning, hand excavation involved selective emptying of 1960 excavation boxes in order to re-examine key areas. Archaeological layers were excavated by trowelling, mattocking and selected removal of stones. Removed stones, subsoil and topsoil were kept in separate heaps to assist backfilling. The trench was eventually backfilled and carefully contoured to replicate the original ground surface prior to the excavation.

The Entrance Rampart

The rampart consisted of a series of stone and clay layers held in place by stone-faced walls. The earliest rampart materials consisted of two clay layers. An initial deposit of reddish brown clay (1040; between c.0.26m and c.0.08m thick) was laid directly onto the natural ironstone. Any pre-existing turf or topsoil appears to have been removed beforehand, perhaps to ensure a solid foundation on the underlying bedrock. A thicker layer of sticky blue/grey clay (1039; c.0.26m thick, thinning to the west) had been deposited over 1040. This was evident in all points across the rampart where interventions allowed access, indicating that it had formed a significant part of the rampart core. Both clay layers (1039, 1040) tailed off significantly towards the western end of the excavated area, indicating the gradual sloping off of the rampart (between c.0.40m and c.0.06m thick). Above the clay layers, the rampart was constructed predominantly from ironstone rubble. A series of radial bays, created by the construction of wedge-shaped ribs of large ironstone blocks (ranging between 0.30 and 0.50m square), was laid as low banks. Dumps of smaller ironstone rubble (1008=1042=1053, measuring c.0.05x0.05x0.03m in size) then filled the bays forming a solid rubble core to the rampart (Figure. 5).

Excavation near the western edge of the rampart revealed a well-laid cobble surface (1044) beneath the red clay rampart core (1040). The cobbled surface was of a higher quality than the main entrance road to the hillfort and had clearly been laid with some care. No evidence for this surface was revealed elsewhere in the trench and therefore its function remains unclear. However, it is clearly one of the earliest deposits in this area, more than likely relating to a pre-rampart phase of the inturned hillfort entrance that perhaps acted as an early hard standing or trackway behind the main ramparts.

The edges of the rampart were contained by stone revetment walls. The northern wall face (1029) was observed over a distance of c.6.5m although it continued further westwards beyond the limit of excavation. The western end had clearly been disturbed, either as a result of stone robbing, or perhaps more likely given its location, damage from medieval ploughing. It comprised a straight length of stone-faced wall c.1m wide constructed with laid blocks of ironstone, bonded with blue/grey clay and survived to a height of c.0.40m. The wall had been inserted within a shallow construction trench cut into or abutting, the existing grey clay layer (1039) that formed the core of the rampart at this point (Figure. 6). The construction cut had a vertical southern edge cut into the clay to allow the insertion/abutment of the wall.
Figure 4  Plan of entrance features in Trench 1
Figure 5  The entrance rampart from the south showing the ribs of larger stone blocks and rubble infill

Figure 6  A detail of the entrance rampart face showing its relationship to the grey clay core of the rampart
The southern rampart face consisted of a series of short lengths (each c.5m) of laid ironstone blocks positioned at slight angles to one another, allowing the wall to curve. Evidence for the stone facing was absent in the westernmost part of the excavated area and was also probably due to plough damage or stone robbing. A slight recess in the stone-facing in the south-eastern corner of the excavation may have been the footing for a stair to provide access to the top of the rampart but this was by no means clear. Slightly further east, close to the edge of the excavation the rampart face may have returned to the north but this was also unclear.

*The ‘guard chamber’* (Figure. 7)

A recessed rectangular room measuring c.5m x 10m was built into the rampart at the same time as the introduction of the stone-facing of the entrance passage. The room lay some 6.5m from the western edge of the trench and was defined by a rectangular recess cut into the clay core of the rampart. The western and southern sides of the room were defined by ironstone-facing laid directly onto the natural ironstone bedrock. The eastern side lay beyond the current excavation but photographs and plans from a trial trench in 1960 suggest that it was built in broadly the same manner. To the north the room appeared to be open to the entrance road and no evidence of a timber screen or stone wall dating from the original occupation of this room was found. The western wall of the room was keyed in to the rampart wall of the entrance passage forming a right-angled corner that overlay a large post hole [1010] though possibly not any post that stood within it (Figure. 8). Whilst the surviving evidence clearly indicates that the post was erected before the wall, it is possible that they were built as part of a broadly contemporaneous design. Alternatively, the post may be part of a timber phase gateway that pre-dates the entrance passage rampart.
The room had been partially excavated in 1960 although the baulks that remained allowed the investigation of the upper fills of the room after it had gone out of use. Remarkably, within the footprint of the 1960 excavation although the original floor levels had been reached much remained intact. The floor levels consisted of a series of firm orange brown silty clay layers (1036), presumably the remains of beaten earth floors, and a more substantial tamped pebble surface (1059). Twenty six sherds of Scored Ware pottery were found among the former. On and between these floor layers were a number of well-preserved charcoal deposits and hearth remains. A charcoal patch (1061) projected from the as yet unexcavated eastern edge of the trench, presumably somewhere in the room’s centre, and lay adjacent to a well-preserved hearth deposit of densely packed ash/charcoal (1060) (Figure. 9). Similar deposits (1070 - charcoal), (1072 – hearth material) & (1074 - charcoal) were located to the west, while patches of heat-scorched clay on the road side of the room further indicated the presence of earlier burning episodes.

Beneath the floor layers near the southern edge of the room lay a linear feature [1063], c.0.30m deep (Figure. 10). The nature of this feature is uncertain as it was not fully exposed; however, its form suggests it was a gully or small ditch. This is either related to an early phase of the hillfort, prior to the construction of the entrance hornwork, or relates to an earlier use of the room, possibly providing drainage. The feature was filled with fairly loose reddish-brown sandy clay (1057) containing small fragments of ironstone, charcoal flecks and a small amount of animal bone.
Figure 9  The exposed section of hearth (1060) in the centre of the entrance chamber

Figure 10  Feature (1063) underlying the entrance chamber floor deposits
Towards the rear (south) of the room a dense patch of charcoal (1046) situated at the top of the floor sequence, reflects a later episode of burning associated with the room’s abandonment. Once the room had gone into disuse two episodes of backfilling are apparent, the earlier of which, (1064) comprised a mid-brown deposit of silty clay which contained large blocks of ironstone rubble. Excavation of a baulk remaining from the 1960 excavation of the room removed a layer of ironstone rubble and silty clay (1020) containing Iron Age pottery and a human finger bone. The similarities and context of both (1020) and (1064) suggest that both were part of the same deposit representing an early episode of the room’s backfilling. Above (1064) was a final infilling layer (1037) made up of a looser mixed ironstone rubble and mid-yellowish brown silty clay that included Roman greywares. Finds recovered from the backfill of the room also included worked bone weaving tools, metalworking (?iron) slag, an iron punch and a pruning hook or knife.

A c.1m wide gap was apparent in the western wall of the room, located approximately 1.5m from the north-west corner nearest the entrance road. The purpose of this gap is unclear and time limitations precluded further excavation. Given its location, on the edge of an earlier 1960 excavation box, it is possible that part of the wall was removed at that time, however no records exist to corroborate this idea. Alternatively the gap may indicate a former doorway or niche although further work would be necessary to confirm this proposition. Loose ironstone rubble filling the gap may relate to an episode of deliberate blocking once the room had gone out of use or ahead of backfilling the 1960 excavation.

Although apparently open to the road, a linear spread of loose ironstone rubble in a sandy clay matrix (1041) lay across the northern side of the room. This layer was deposited directly above the latest evidence for flooring, suggesting it was a late addition before the room was backfilled. The stones in this layer formed an uneven, but generally flat surface, approximately 1m wide and were located some 0.70m from the northern edge of the room. The stone arrangement had evidently extended across the exposed part of the room but had been disturbed during the 1960 excavation. Its western edge corresponded with the possible gap in the western wall of the room while its presence in the eastern section suggested it continues into the unexcavated half of the room. The purpose of this layer is unclear although it may be interpreted as a crude surface or the base of a temporary wall or bank. If the latter, such a wall may have blocked the open side of the room late in its history. Such a feature may have been necessary during backfilling of the room, to stop material spilling out onto the entrance roadway.

A large post hole [1069] with vertical sides was located in the south-west corner of the room. It was unclear if this feature was integral to the room’s construction or represented an earlier timber phase, perhaps related to the large post holes set within the road surface [1010 & 1052]. Stones from the wall had been removed during the excavation in 1960, unfortunately removing any evidence for their relationship (Figure. 11). The post hole had a primary fill of loose, dark silty soil (1068), which had apparently been capped with a deposit of firm yellow silty clay (1067). Above this was a final silting deposit (1065) containing a single sherd of Iron age pottery.
The entrance road

A section of the entrance roadway that had previously been revealed by the 1960 excavation was exposed on the northern edge of Trench 1. The road surface was patchy, and survived as a series of partial overlapping layers that had originally been laid down on the exposed ironstone bedrock. The number of these layers and patches seem indicative of long use and heavy wear on this road. The earliest levels of road surfacing were represented by large angular fragments of ironstone in a reddish-brown clay matrix (1027). Above this was a layer of medium-sized angular ironstone fragments set within an orange/grey clay matrix (1026). Limited evidence for the uppermost road surface was also present on the edge of the trench. This comprised a well laid, very compacted layer of sub-angular and rounded river cobbles (1023).
The gate

Two substantial post-holes [1010] & [1052] revealed on the northern side of Trench 1 were probably part of a timber gateway to the hill fort. Both had been revealed during the 1960 excavation. [1052] was located in the north western corner of the trench and was found to have been fully excavated in 1960. The post-hole was circular in plan, and c.0.75m in diameter. In profile it had very steep sloping sides, converging slightly to reach a narrow flat base some 1.05m deep.

Post-hole [1010] lay c.6m to the east and was c.0.80m in diameter and excavated to a depth of c.1m. Unlike post-hole [1052] it had only been partially excavated in 1960 and still retained in-situ fills. The earliest, (1012) consisted of a charcoal-rich, sticky grey clay. Above this a deposit of compact yellowish-grey clay (1033) contained frequent flat ironstone fragments. A concentration of larger ironstone blocks (1030) on the upper edges of the post hole may have been the remnants of post packing.

The relationship between the post-holes and road surface is unclear and it is possible that the posts were inserted either before, or after the road was laid down. Equally, their relationship to the northern rampart face is difficult to determine. The post-holes were partially overlain by the inserted rampart wall, indicating that they probably predate it. Whist this may be likely, the entrance posts were probably standing when the renewed rampart was built given that the core of each post-hole; the area presumably containing the post, lay beyond the rampart face.

Other features

Excavation on the southern side of Trench 1 beyond the rampart exposed a thin layer of re-deposited subsoil with few finds suggesting little activity in the immediate lee of the earthworks. However, two cut features were revealed in the south-east corner of the trench. The earliest of these was a small undated post hole [1038] filled with mid-greyish brown silty clay (1019) that incorporated two sherds of Iron Age pottery. This cut through a compact layer of blue/grey silty clay (1009) beyond which the excavation did not reach in this part of the trench.

Above this was a layer of mid-orange brown silty sandy clay (1002=1004) below which was a shallow pit [1006], approximately c.1.5m wide and only 0.05m deep. Despite its shallow depth the fill of this feature, (1005 – mid orange brown silty clay) contained a generous assemblage of finds including 63 sherds of Iron Age Scored Ware pottery, animal bone and a worked bone pin (SF101) as well as charcoal flecks and heat cracked stones.
Figure 12 Composite plan of Trench 2
Trench 2 (Figure 12)

Trench 2 measured c.22m x 15m and was located on the northern side of the hillfort, adjacent to the inner edge of the rampart earthworks. This excavation was positioned to incorporate a trench excavated in 1971. During machining it quickly became apparent that a thick layer of ploughsoil (up to 0.6m thick) relating to a former medieval headland, lay directly below the topsoil. This was too deep to remove by hand and was machined off in the western half of the trench to reveal the underlying deposits. Most of the eastern half of the trench was then left unexcavated with the exception of a hand-excavated slot through the 1971 trench in order to re-examine the exposed section. The eastern face of the 1971 trench edge was subsequently excavated back 1m by hand in order to obtain dating evidence and samples for palaeoenvironmental analysis.

![Figure 13](image_url)  
**Figure 13**  The newly excavated section in the rear of the northern rampart

**Rampart layers**

**Eastern half of Trench 2**

Following re-excavation and recording of the 1971 trench, a c.1x4m slot was excavated into the eastern section to provide fresh evidence for construction of the rear of the main rampart and the build up of soils against it (Figure. 13). The earliest layer (2051) had been deposited directly onto the underlying subsoil, indicating that the ground had been stripped back to bedrock prior to the construction of the rampart, as also seen in Trench 1. Context (2051) consisted of yellowish grey/brown silty clay containing much stone rubble. Very occasional charcoal flecks and animal bone fragments were recovered from this layer but it was otherwise undated. This layer was interpreted as being an early revetment against the original rubble core of the rampart lying beyond the limits of excavation to the north. Above this layer, a deposit of looser rubble in a mid to dark grey clay silt matrix (2043) may have represented further reinforcement of the rampart core. Overlying both rubble layers were relatively stone-free deposits possibly indicative of buried ground surfaces or occupation layers within the hillfort. Overlying the tail of (2051) was a layer of soft, pale reddish-brown silty clay (2016), 0.13m thick, which contained a small group of animal bones. This was in
turn overlaid by another Iron Age occupation deposit, (2032 – mid greyish-brown clay silt) from which Iron Age pottery and animal bone were recovered. Above all of these deposits, layers (2039) and (2033) consisted of spreads of large rubble blocks extending into the hillfort interior and probably providing an indication of the erosion or collapse of the top of the rampart core as it ceased to be maintained. A final layer (2025)/(2026) = (2004) probably represented further episodes of erosion of the rampart mixed with occupation/waste deposits in the interior. This layer was characterised by large quantities of Roman pottery and animal bone and was also found widely across the western side of the trench (2004). All these deposits were subsequently buried beneath the medieval ploughsoil (2001).

**Western half of Trench 2 (Figure. 14)**

Much of the western half of the trench was characterised by a series of layers associated with the erosion of the rampart. To the north, erosion layer (2004) = (2025/2026) extended from the inner edge of the rampart earthwork some 5m where it gradually tailed off to the south. The layer consisted of friable yellow-orange brown sandy silty clay containing abundant ironstone rubble fragments, frequent Roman pottery and animal bone fragments.

On the southern edge of the trench, a metalled surface was represented by a layer of river-worn cobbles and ironstone fragments within a greyish-brown sandy matrix (2014). This was recorded over an area of c.3.4m x c.1.3m but extended beneath the rampart tumble layer (2004) to the north and beyond the southern trench edge. The limited view of this surface hindered interpretation but it seems likely to have been either a trackway running broadly parallel to the rampart or a yard. The river-worn cobbles stood out as an unusual resource and are likely to have been imported from the nearby river valleys. This surface is probably the same as seen in the southern end of the 1971 excavation and included both Iron Age and Roman pottery.
Further rubble layers and patches of rubble (2002?=2004?), 2005 and 2010 contained Iron Age and Roman pot and appear to represent further minor episodes of rampart erosion or tumble. Context 2009 a further shallow rubble deposit contained only Iron Age pottery but also probably represents an episode of rampart erosion.

Buried beneath the rubble spread 2005 was a thin Iron Age occupation deposit (2020) containing LIA ‘Belgic’ burnished pot, human skull fragments and much Scored Ware. This in turn overlay further Iron Age deposits (2024) and (2023). The latter lay adjacent to the cobbled surface and was a layer of mid-orange/brown clay silt (2023) which was probably an occupation deposit or ground surface at the time of Iron Age occupation. This layer was originally thought to be the natural subsoil, however, occasional charcoal and bone inclusions proved otherwise. The layer is probably a mixture of eroded subsoil and further surviving Iron Age occupation debris. It lies directly above apparently undisturbed natural ground and beneath the rampart erosion deposits.

**Features below tumble layers**

A number of features lay buried beneath the rampart erosion and later occupation deposits and were seen to cut through layer (2023). On the western side of the trench an excavated slot partially revealed evidence for two layers, (2018) & (2021), which both contained Iron Age pottery and probably relate to deposits behind the rampart, similar to those revealed more extensively on the eastern side of the trench.

**The roundhouse and associated features (Figure. 15)**

Excavation beneath layer (2004) on the western edge of the trench revealed two curvilinear gullies that may form the east-facing entrance of a roundhouse. The larger gully, [2048] protruded from the western trench edge in an easterly direction before curving northwards. The gully was fairly regularly shaped, approximately 0.60m wide x 0.16m deep with a steep sided U-shaped profile. The gully terminal was rounded and slightly broader, widening to c.1.10m and becoming deeper at c.0.27m. A concentration of flat stones along the inner, western edge of the gully near the terminal may have been the remains of a stone lining although given their limited extent the function is unclear. An extensive range of Iron Age pottery and animal bone was recovered from the fills of this feature (2036; 2047).
A corresponding curvilinear gully was revealed to the north, [2054], apparently forming a roundhouse entrance some 3m wide. Gully [2054] was approximately 0.50m wide x c.0.20m deep, with a similar U-shaped profile to [2048]. This also had a similar fill (2055) and finds assemblage to its southerly counterpart. If this gully did constitute the northern arm of a roundhouse it was located hard against the rear of the rampart or may even have pre-dated some or all of its phases of construction. Adjacent to [2054], slightly to the east was a spread of burnt material containing metalworking waste and frequent charcoal flecks (2056), possibly relating to activities associated with the roundhouse.

Between the two gully terminals lay a cluster of features including several possible post holes, [2031], [2038] and [2050] and a possible pit [2029]. All of these were very shallow and difficult to distinguish from layer (2023) so their exact extent is in some doubt. However, a further concentration of metalworking slag was recovered from a small circular pit/post hole [2038] perhaps suggesting a relationship with layer (2056).

Further east a circular pit measuring c. 1.20m in diameter x c. 0.22m deep, [2046] contained a single fill of mottled clay-rich fill (2027) with charcoal flecks and pebble/stone inclusions as well as Scored Ware pottery and bone fragments. Slightly east of this was a smaller pit, [2041], also cutting through layer (2023). This was c.0.30m in diameter x 0.22m deep. A single light brownish grey fill, (2040) contained only animal bone.

**Trench 3** (Figure 16)

Trench 3 was located to the east of the hillfort and designed to evaluate the geophysical anomalies indicating archaeological activity on the exterior of the rampart earthworks (Figure 2).
The trench measured c. 30m x c. 2.80m, had an average depth of c. 0.60m and lay on a north-east – south-west alignment. The subsoil consisted predominantly of orange brown clay silt although the south-western end of the trench also contained sandy gravels and broken ironstone fragments.

Near the centre of the trench two linear features [3012] & [3013] lay on a north-west – south-east alignment. The westernmost, [3012], had a V-shaped profile measuring between c. 0.75-0.85m wide and c. 0.34m deep. A single fill, (3009) consisted of firm, mid-orange brown clay silt containing heat-cracked stones, Scored ware pottery, flint blades and a complete (but broken) saddle quern. To the east, [3013] had a squarer profile, measuring between c. 0.50-0.70m wide and c. 0.15-0.20m deep. This feature also contained a single fill of firm mid-orange grey clay silt (3011) from which plain Iron Age pottery and flint was recovered. A thin layer (c. 0.06m deep) of light orange grey silty gravel (3010) lay between the two linear features although its origin was unclear. The deposit had similarities to furrow remains that were observed in the trench but it lay on a different alignment. Further excavation will help better understand this deposit.

Another linear feature [3007] on a similar north-west – south-east alignment lay approximately 2.5m to the east. This was wider, but shallower, measuring c.1m wide x c.0.20m deep. An indeterminate edge on the north-western side of the feature may have represented a separate feature although this can only be clarified through more extensive excavation. In common with the other nearby linear features [3007] also had a single fill, (3008) which consisted of mid-orange brown clay silt containing charcoal flecks, Iron Age pottery and flint fragments.

The butt end of a further feature [3005] lay close to the eastern end of the trench. This had an irregular shape close to the southern trench edge and may have been two inter-cutting features although it was difficult to establish any relationship. [3005] had shallow rounded profile measuring c. 1.15m wide x c. 0.26m deep. Pottery, flint and bone were recovered from a single fill of mid-orange brown clay silt (3006), which also contained charcoal flecks and heat-cracked stones. The base of a Scored Ware jar in an unusual grog tempered fabric
was found close to the southern edge of the excavated section of [3005] and was of possible Late Iron Age date. Investigation of the wider, more irregularly shaped area connected to [3005] revealed a similar fill (3014) both in colour and consistency. Heat-cracked stones and metal-working slag were recovered from this section.

Figure 17 The hearth [3002] in section
DISCUSSION

Whilst a preliminary season focussing on the re-evaluation of earlier work, the survey and excavations in 2010 have provided a range of fresh insights into the history of Burrough Hill and indicated the ample potential for future characterisation of its date and role.

The magnetometer survey gives a clear impression of the scale and distribution of activity across the interior of the hillfort. The large number of macula anomalies confirms the impression from the 1960 and 1967 excavations of the provision of hundreds of pits but also indicates occupation in the form of roundhouses lying in the lee of the ramparts. Furthermore, other small enclosures and possible ditched sub-divisions of the interior point to the complexity and possible zoning of activity inside the hillfort. Perhaps more surprising was the evidence for further settlement outside the hillfort to the east. Whether this settlement is of a different date or character is as yet open to question but it is interesting to note that unlike the interior there are few pits among the round houses and small enclosures here.

Excavations in Trench 1 have shown that the entrance corridor rampart was carefully constructed with layers of clay and locally quarried ironstone, its core reinforced through the use of transverse ‘ribs’ of large ironstone blocks, all lying behind well-built dry stone facades. This rampart was c.12m thick at its greatest extent and probably originally stood to a height well in excess of the 2m earthworks that remain today. Built into the rampart was a rectangular, recessed room or chamber, 5m deep and (if the 1960 excavations are correct), c.10m wide that opened onto the entrance passage into the hillfort. Despite partial excavation in 1960, a series of beaten earth floors with attendant hearths survived within. Tools associated with metalworking and weaving/spinning and small quantities of Scored Ware pottery were found within the room, which would appear to have been in use in the Middle-Late Iron Age. A single enigmatic cut feature beneath these floors may hint at earlier, possibly pre-rampart phase activity but requires further excavation. After a final episode of burning, the room was partially backfilled (possibly in the Iron Age) before it was fully backfilled in or after the Roman period. At present the artefactual evidence can indicate only a broad Mid-Late Iron Age date for the chamber’s construction and use but the good stratified sequence recorded, the carbonised residues from the in-situ hearths and the animal bone recovered throughout should all provide the basis for a good chronological model based upon Bayesian analysis of radiocarbon dates once the ongoing assessment of samples is complete.

Two 1m deep-post holes marked the position of large timber gate posts that may have supported a walkway spanning the entrance. These may have predated the entrance passage rampart but equally could have been integral to its design. The overall effect is of a gate and flanking chamber(s) set towards the end of a long stone faced corridor. This design has its closest parallels in the Shropshire hillforts of Titterstone Clee (O’Neill 1934) and the Wrekin (Stanford et al 1985) or at Eddisbury in Cheshire (Varley 1950) rather than hillforts to the south such as Rainsborough, Northants (Avery et al 1968).

At the northern end of the site, the excavations in Trench 2 have also clarified the earlier work and extended it. The re-excavation and then expansion of the 1970/1 trench has revealed the construction methods used and sequence for the rear of the main rampart (though not its core or exterior). As in Trench1 the rampart appears to have been built directly on to the underlying subsoil after any turf and topsoil had been removed. Unlike the entrance passage rampart though, the main rampart had no interior revetment wall. Instead a succession of rubble and beaten earth layers were piled up over a stone core to form a sloping inner rampart. It is not clear as yet whether this was done as part of a single short phase of
construction or is indicative of a more gradual process of periodic repair or deliberate increase of the height and size of the rear of the rampart.

No evidence of a pre-rampart timber phase or timber lacing within the rampart were found within the narrow confines of this trench, though a fuller cross section of the main defences would be needed to confirm this. Dating evidence was limited within the small section exposed but ongoing assessment of bulk samples from several layers in the rampart make up along with the small quantities of pottery and bone recovered may provide some useful material for radiocarbon assay.

Lying in the lee of the rampart and possibly pre-dating some of the layers reinforcing it were the remains of a roundhouse and associated domestic and craft activities again seemingly dating to the Middle-Late Iron Age. Both the quantity and condition of finds and bone from these features are good and are currently undergoing further study that should help to better characterise the nature of this occupation. Subsequently, layers of rubble tumble and eroded soil accumulated to the rear of the rampart as the hillfort gradually fell into disrepair, probably in the Late Iron Age and/or Roman period. A refuse layer rich in Roman pottery near the top of the sequence of erosion/tumble deposits indicated activity within this part of Burrough Hill between the later 1st and 4th centuries AD. This evidence, alongside pottery from the nearby pits dug in 1967 suggest fairly extensive occupation of the northern part of the hillfort interior in the Roman period in direct contrast to the scarcity of evidence for occupation near the entrance to the south east.

Whilst only an evaluation, Trench 3 confirmed the presence of surviving stratified evidence for Iron Age extramural settlement to the east of the hillfort. There are few obvious initial indications of the detailed date of this occupation though the presence of Scored Wares and grog-tempered fabrics of possible Late Iron Age’ transitional’ wares may suggest a Mid-Late Iron Age date. The recovery of carbonised remains from an in situ hearth (3003), however, bodes well for the possibility of further radiocarbon dating of the date and duration of occupation here.
Bibliography


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