

INVESTIGATIONS AT DANESFIELD CAMP,

MEDMENHAM, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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SUMMARY

Excavations by Oxford Archaeological Unit at the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Danesfield Camp, Medmenham, revealed evidence for Neolithic activity. More significantly, middle Iron Age features and finds were present within the hillfort, establishing its date of occupation for the first time. Finds included flintwork, an iron ring, pottery, and structural daub. The results of the work are described, and an attempt is made to place the site in its Iron Age context.

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INTRODUCTION

The site and its setting

Danesfield Camp (SU 817884), also known as Danes Ditches (Cocks 1911), is a bivallate earthwork occupying an outcrop of chalk-with-flints capped with a thick layer of plateau gravel, lying immediately to the N of a bend in the River Thames between Henley and Marlow (Fig. 1); the Camp is 1 km E of the village of Medmenham. The site is defined to the S by a steep scarp down to the N bank of the Thames, and on the E and NE by a double bank and ditch. Most of the W side of the circuit has been obliterated, presumably by construction works for Danesfield

House, but at its S end a portion of the bank survives. No original entrance is evident in the surviving earthwork.

The interior is bisected by a N-S shallow valley and stream, sloping gently from the top of the plateau down to the Thames scarp. The site thus provides an excellent location for security, and for observation of river traffic both upstream and downstream, combined with ready access to the river Thames. A second earthwork, substantial and univallate, lies 1 km to the W of Danesfield Camp, above Medmenham village. This is believed to be prehistoric, although no formal archaeological work seems to have been undertaken, and the site has suffered considerable damage from quarrying (RCHM 1912, 256).

Danesfield Camp has been recognised as a hillfort since the late 18th century, when it was described as 'A strong and perfect Danish encampment' (Langley 1797, 335). This ascription persisted into the early 20th century, and parallels were drawn with the configuration and siting of Dyke Hills at Dorchester on Thames, Oxon (Allcroft 1908, 388). The site was listed as unclassified in 1912 (RCHM 1912, 256). The misinterpretation of the site accounts for the place-name of Danesfield Camp/Danes Ditches; a farm on the site had been known as Medlicotts in the later 18th century, but the then owner changed the name to Danesfield House soon after 1786 (VCH, 85, 88).

A H Cocks questioned the accepted Saxon date of the site, partly because of the chance discovery of a bronze spearhead

(Cocks 1910). He also correctly pointed out the incongruity of comparing Danesfield Camp with Dyke Hills (Cocks 1911, 24), because the latter occupies flat land in a bend in the Thames whereas the former sits on top of a cliff rising from the bank; nevertheless, he stopped short of suggesting an Iron Age date. Other chance finds from the site include Neolithic or Bronze Age flint flakes (Plaisted 1925, 4-5; Farley pers comm). A Neolithic flint axe was found on the N bank of the Thames at the bottom of the scarp (County SMR No. 5119). No formal excavations had been undertaken prior to 1990.

Much of the interior of the hillfort has been landscaped to form the gardens of Danesfield House, a late Victorian mock-Tudor manor house constructed between 1898-1901. A building programme during the Second World War caused extensive damage to the W half of the site; at this time Danesfield House was occupied by the Royal Air Force. None of the RAF buildings survive. The E and S portion of the site has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County Number BU 135, Fig. 1).

The redevelopment

The owners of the site, Danesfield Ltd., proposed to convert the House into a luxury hotel. This involved the construction of a new wing and maze to the E of the House in the Scheduled area, and the construction of a car park to the N of the House (Fig. 2). Scheduled Monument Consent was required for the former works.

The archaeological response

In August 1990 the Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook an assessment of the archaeological deposits on the site. Five trenches were excavated in the Scheduled area, while a sixth trench and a test-pit sampled the car-park (Fig. 2). In all cases, topsoil was removed mechanically; thereafter archaeological deposits were cleaned and investigated manually. Deposits observed in the car park area were such as to merit a watching brief and small-scale excavation in conjunction with the construction groundworks (Figs 2 and 3); this work was undertaken in late October and early December 1990.

RESULTS

The assessment in the scheduled area

Assessment trenches 1 to 5, within the Scheduled Ancient Monument, failed to produce archaeological deposits. A few worked flints were recovered from silty deposits within the plateau gravel; the artefacts are unlikely to be in their primary contexts. No later prehistoric material was recovered.

The car-park site

Assessment trench 6, in the car park area to the N of the House, revealed several deposits of archaeological interest; three archaeological features were excavated. Several modern features were present. Further investigations were concentrated in this area. Context numbers were assigned in a continuous sequence for

both the assessment and the subsequent observations. Contexts 1-15 were assigned during the assessment; contexts 16-47 were used during the later observation and excavation. Numbers were not given to Victorian and modern features or layers during the latter works.

Groundworks for the car-park were slight, and in some areas did not entirely remove the existing topsoil; deep excavations were confined to four E-W lines of stanchion footings, and a N-S services trench through the centre of the car park. Thus only a small number of features under threat from construction had to be excavated. Two areas up to 30 m long (E-W) and each up to 10 m wide were manually cleaned at the E end of the car park; the two areas were separated by an existing road (Figs 2 and 3). All features which appeared to be of archaeological origin were planned; definition was by soil/fill type and/or by the presence of artefacts revealed in exposed surfaces during initial site cleaning and subsequent examination.

The nature of the coarse, flinty plateau gravel made the edges of features and the interfaces between strata indistinct. This problem was compounded by the presence in the gravel of broad pockets of sandy silt and thick bands of silty clay, making it difficult to differentiate between geological and archaeological deposits. The features and possible features observed during the assessment and subsequent work are plotted in Figure 3.

Phase I - Neolithic

An E-W feature, F28, 0.26 m deep and filled with pale sandy silts, contained several flakes of worked flint. F28 was overlain by a silty layer 0.09 m thick, 26; this was partially sealed by layer 22, of similar character and 0.11 m thick. Both layers also contained worked flint, but their full extents could not be traced due to the limitations of the observation. The fill of the feature, and the layers, lacked either the ash or humic content characteristic of the Iron Age deposits (see below).

Posthole F18, which cut through layer 22 into the eastern terminus of F28, also contained worked flint. The post-hole, however, is more likely to be an Iron Age feature. The flintwork is described below.

Phase II - Middle Iron Age

Several possible pits were observed during the investigation; artefacts were recovered from some of these, and two were excavated in the assessment trench. A large rim sherd was recovered from the surface of unexcavated pit F17, which was irregular in plan and filled with large flints in dark, silty loam. Pit F8, 1.14 m deep, was roughly oval in plan, and was sealed by the later ploughsoil, 3 (see below); its layered nature indicates gradual infilling. It produced a small number of potsherds, and a circular iron ring. A sub-rectangular pit, F7, was also sealed under the ploughsoil; it was 0.94 m deep, although the top had been truncated by ploughing. The pit

contained much domestic debris, including very well-fired daub fragments with clear wattle impressions, and fragments from several pottery vessels, including the substantial remains of a large coarseware storage jar.

Small pits F29 and F30 (both unexcavated) contained ashy fills, but no artefacts were recovered from them. A third small pit F11 (0.27 m deep) was recognised in section in trial trench 6 (Fig. 4). The pit was recorded in plan as F31 during the salvage excavations (Fig. 3). No finds were recovered from the pit, but its fill was ashy.

Possible postholes in the cleaned area were characterised by loamy, often very dark grey fills, sometimes containing large flint nodules and chalk fragments which may have been used as packing stones. Six postholes form a possible fence line, F38, 10 m long, running between pits F8 and F17. A further six postholes, F34, F35, and F39-F42, form a sub-circular structure F43, 6 m x 5 m, in the N half of the cleaned area. Postholes F34 and F35 were excavated. No dating material was recovered, but the fills were very similar to those in the excavated pits.

Several possible ditches and gullies were present in the cleaned area. N of the road, unexcavated ditch F44, aligned SW-NE, terminated close to the butt-end of a small, unexcavated gully, F45, which was aligned N-S. A small, sharply-curving gully, F36, terminated immediately N of posthole F35 and was undatable. South of the road, four parallel N-S features, F21,

F23, F46 and F47, may be plough furrows.

Phase III - Post-prehistoric layers

A thin band of fine silt, layer 12, possibly a buried turf line, was observed at the W end of the assessment trench, but could not be found in the excavation. Layer 12 was sealed by a coarse sandy silt loam, layer 13, which was found elsewhere over areas of silty clay. A gravelly loam, layer 3, was present over areas of a flinty deposit of plateau gravel; layers 3 and 13 were sealed by a subsoil layer, 2, of silty loam. Layers 3 and 13 appear to be ploughsoils predating the construction of Danesfield House; the base of layer 3 is undulating, and V-profile marks consistent with plough disturbance could be seen in the layers below. No artefacts were recovered from these layers. Several small sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from layer 12, but these are likely to be residual. These layers are shown in Figure 4.

Phase IV - Victorian and modern features

A series of N-S and E-W trenches, some still containing intact concrete footings, mark the outline of Second World War buildings. Extensive modern workings to the E and W of the planned area are filled with slabs of brick wall and reinforced concrete, representing the demolished remains of these buildings. In some cases, the footings are cut through a dark silt loam containing broken brick and glass fragments, probably Victorian and associated with the construction or occupation of Danesfield House. Several small pits with occasional brick fragments and

large pits with chalky fills may date from either of these late episodes. The dark loam with bricks and the modern topsoil, 1, sealed subsoil layer 2.

THE FINDS

The iron object

Ten joining fragments forming an iron ring. Very corroded. Square section, 4 mm x 4 mm. Original diameter of ring approx. 100 mm. Pit F8/3. Not illustrated.

The Iron Age pottery

by A Barclay

The assessment and salvage excavation of the car-park produced 66 (774 g) sherds of pottery from Iron Age contexts and two unstratified sherds. Three pits produced most of the material: pit F7, 40 sherds (644 g); pit F8, 20 sherds (92 g); and pit F17, 2 sherds (28 g). The remaining 4 sherds (10 g) came from layer 12. The fabrics were analysed using a binocular microscope (x20). Nine fabrics were identified and are described below according to principal inclusion types.

Ferruginous fabrics

1 20% ferruginous pellets, reddish-brown iron oxide, irregular and well-rounded (2-3 mm). Some vesicles from leached pellets.
5% <0.5 mm sub-angular to sub-rounded white and colourless quartz. Rare grass stem voids. 41 sherds, 416 g.

2 5% ferruginous pellets, as above. Up to 5% quartz, sub-angular and sub-rounded 0.1-0.5 mm, white, colourless, yellow and pink. Rare organics. 1 sherd, 43 g.

Quartz-tempered fabrics

3 <5% sub-angular quartz, up to 0.5 mm, white and colourless. Very fine quartz matrix. 28 sherds, 141 g.

4 Up to 10% sub-angular quartz 0.5-1.5 mm, white and colourless. 10 sherds, 76 g.

5 15-20% quartz and quartzite 0.5-1.5 mm, sub-rounded and sub-angular, white and colourless. 1 sherd, 20 g.

6 15% quartz up to 1 mm, sub-round and white. 10% ferruginous pellets, some well-rounded 1-3 mm. 3 sherds, 22 g.

7 <5% fine quartz up to 0.1 mm and rare angular flint up to 2 mm. 6 sherds, 46 g.

Flint-tempered fabric

8 Up to 15% angular flint 0.5-2 mm in a fine quartz matrix. 5 sherds, 32 g.

Grog-tempered fabric

9 10% angular grog up to 3 mm, rare flint and quartz sand. 1 sherd, 6 g.

The fabrics characterised by ferruginous pellets and/or quartz, 1-7, accounted for all of the pit assemblages (60 sherds). Fabrics 8 and 9 were represented by only 6 sherds which were either unstratified or from layer 12. Fabrics 1 and 2 were extremely light in weight, suggesting post-depositional alteration of the iron-rich inclusions.

Catalogue

- P1. 7/1 11 g. Upright rounded rim from a globular vessel. Outer surface smoothed. Fab. 3. Ext., core and int. dark grey.
- P2. 7/1 46 g. Six rim and body sherds from a globular jar. Fab. 7. Ext. uneven dark grey and light brownish-orange, core medium dark grey and int. medium greyish-brown. (Fig. 5)
- P3. 7/1 26 g. Body sherd with linear groove decoration. Fab. 3. Ext. dark greyish-brown, core dark grey and int. dark greyish-brown.
- P4. 7/2 320 g. 22 joining sherds from the rim and body of a large coarse-ware jar. Fab. 1. Ext. light pinky brown with greyish black fire cloud, core bluish grey and int. light pinky brown. (Fig. 5)
- P5. 8/1 20 g. Upright rim with parallel, horizontal grooved linear decoration from a straight-sided vessel. Fab. 5.

- Ext. blotchy reddish brown/dark grey, core light-medium grey and int. light-medium grey.
- P6. 8/3 17 g. Base sherd with slight splayed foot. Fab. 4. Ext. medium greyish-brown, core dark grey and int. medium greyish-brown.
- P7. 8/3 48 g. Upright rim with parallel, horizontal grooved linear decoration from a straight sided vessel. Fab. 4. Ext. dark grey, core medium grey and int. dark grey. (Fig. 5)
- P8. 17/1 28 g. Simple upright rounded rim from a globular vessel. Surface smoothed. Fab. 3. Ext. medium-dark grey, core medium grey and int. medium-dark grey. (Fig. 5)

Manufacture

The vessels have all been hand-made, though no characteristics of ring or strap construction were observed. The inclusions of quartz and flint can all be found in the superficial geology. The ferruginous pellets are more likely to be naturally occurring in the clays rather than deliberately added (fabrics 1 and 2). The clays had undergone little modification except for the addition of quartz and grog tempers.

The vessels have all been open-fired with typical black cores where combustion of the organic content has been incomplete. Vessel 4 has a large blackened fire-cloud were the

vessel has been in direct contact with the bonfire fuel.

Form, decoration and surface treatment

Three recognisable forms were recorded. Vessels 1-3 and 9 are globular jars, 5 and 7 represent straight-sided saucepan pots, and the large vessel, 4, is of barrel form. Rims tend to be simple and rounded, although 4 is flat and externally expanded.

Decoration occurs on four sherds, consisting of parallel or single horizontal grooves (catalogue nos 5, 7 and 3). Surface treatment occurs either as smoothing or burnishing on the finer vessels.

Discussion

Pit F7 produced sherds from globular jars (1-3) and part of a large storage vessel (4). Pit F17 also produced sherds from a globular jar (8). The straight-sided rim sherds (5 and 7) from saucepan pots were found only in pit F8. The two forms are contemporary, however, and the differential distribution is not necessarily chronological. Vessels in the ferruginous fabrics, 1 and 2, and quartz-tempered fabric 6, occur in pit F7 and 8; fabric 4 is present in pit F8 and F17. The grog-tempered fabric, 9, is characteristic of 'Belgic' wares (50 BC - AD 50), but the single sherd was unstratified. Material in the flint-tempered fabric, 8, was from the buried soil, layer 12, or was unstratified.

The globular jar and saucepan pot forms are characteristic

of the later middle Iron Age (300 - 100 BC, IA phase 3; Saunders 1971, 19). The middle Iron Age ceramics of Buckinghamshire have affinities with the Upper Thames Region and similarly lack the decoration found in the assemblages of the Lower Thames (Saunders 1971, 19). Saucepan pots with simple linear decoration have been recorded at Cholesbury Camp, Buckinghamshire (Kimball 1933, plate VI.2) and Blewburton Hill, Berks (Collins 1947, 22 and figs 11.2 and 14; Collins 1953, 35 and fig. 13.1) and are thought to have been introduced in the 3rd century BC (Harding 1972, 101). Similar globular jars are known from Cassington, Oxon and Hatford, Berks (Harding 1972, 160 and plate 59, and 163 and plate 63). In the Upper Thames Valley, middle Iron Age assemblages containing comparative vessel forms have been excavated at Ashville, Farmoor, and Watkins Farm (Allen 1990, 42).

The daub

by A Barclay

Two pits, F7 and F8, produced structural daub. Pit F7 contained most of the material (3.114 kg) in two separate deposits, while pit F8 produced only two pieces. The daub had been fired to varying degrees but was generally soft and low-fired; the fabric was occasionally hard and ceramic. Much of the material was oxidised to reddish-orange or brown, but incomplete combustion and the burning of the wattles produced sooted surfaces and blackened areas. The weathered, abraded and burnt surfaces made fabric analysis difficult, but two fabrics were identified microscopically (x20), as follows:

A: <5% sub-rounded white and colourless quartz. Rare organics (grass stems), flint and quartzite 3-5 mm. The inclusions were ill-sorted and probably occurred naturally within the clay.

B: 10% sub-rounded quartz up to 1 mm, white, red, black and colourless. Rare sub-angular flint up to 5 mm.

The fabrics were spatially discrete with A coming from pit F7 and B from pit F8. In both cases unmodified clay appears to have been used as daub. Three pieces from pit F7 are illustrated (Fig. 5).

D1. 7/3 S.F. 9. Fab. A. 331 g. Two joining fragments with inner surface only. Wattle impressions: five horizontal rods (diameter up to 17 mm) including sharpened ends and one vertical sail (diameter indeterminate). Surface colour oxidised greyish-buff.

D2. 7/3 S.F. 9. Fab. A. 76 g. Moulded, rounded edge. Wattle impressions: two horizontal rods bent back around a double vertical sail. Surface colour varied cream-buff to greyish black.

D3. 7/1 S.F. 8. Fab. B. 140 g. The fragment has both a pitted outer surface and an inner scraped surface (up to 40 mm thick). Wattle impressions: six horizontal rods (diameter 7-9 mm) and one vertical

sail (diameter 15 mm). Surface colour oxidised reddish-brown.

Two fills, 7/1 and 7/3, contained dumps of fired clay. Fill 7/1 contained 1.838 kg (41 pieces). Collectively the pieces either had a rough, pitted surface which tended to be slightly convex, or an inner, wiped or smoothed concave surface with striations and fingerprints. In total 10 inner and 7 outer surfaces were identified. Impressions left from wattle work were found in at least 13 fragments. Horizontal rod impressions were most numerous, the rods varying in diameter from 12-17 mm. Two examples of vertical sails were found, occurring with rods; the sails were of a greater diameter than the rods.

The rod and sail impressions tended to be round, suggesting that whole rather than cleft or trimmed shoots were used. Two impressions of sharpened cut ends were recorded. The weave tended to be loose with gaps between the rods of up to 10 mm. Only single examples of sails were found so that the spacing between could not be recorded although it can tentatively be suggested to be greater than 120 mm in some cases (D1, Fig. 5).

Four pieces had a concave surface, with a curvature suggesting a diameter of \underline{c} . 200 mm. The daub was oxidised brownish-red to orange, but the concave surface was blackened as were the rod impressions. It is inferred that the daub abutted a horizontal round timber running parallel with the rods. A single fragment (D2, Fig. 5) had a rounded profile, and contained

two impressions of rods which had been bent back around a sail. The fragment is interpreted as being a finished edge; a similar piece was found in fill 7/3.

Fill 7/3 contained 1.276 kg of daub. This material was less abraded than the assemblage from fill 7/1. Ten outer and 14 inner surfaces were found among the 35 fragments. Most of the pieces had impressions from either rods or sails. One piece (D3, Fig. 5) has both inner and outer surfaces, and both rod and sail impressions. The rods were quite small, 7-9 mm in diameter, and loosely woven. The daub was 40 mm thick. The outer rods lay close to the weathered outer surface, suggesting that the original thickness may have been greater. This fragment is comparatively thin; other incomplete pieces are of a similar thickness. There is a lip on the inner surface and a similar, less complete piece has an upper surface suggesting that the wall daub abutted an horizontal timber.

Discussion

All of the daub had been discarded into pits, mostly in two dumps in pit F7, in conjunction with other domestic refuse. Most of the material had wattle impressions, and therefore derived from standing structures within the hillfort.

Structural wall daub from the hillfort at Danebury, Hants, was compared with reused hurdle-work from waterlogged prehistoric contexts in the Somerset levels (Poole 1984, 113-4). Close similarities between the construction and size of the hurdles and

the daub impressions were found. The structural daub from Danesfield is similar to the Danebury daub. The outer, pitted surfaces of the Danesfield daub show signs of weathering, implying that the daub was partly exposed.

The worked flint

by A Brown

Seventy-one worked flints were recovered during the assessment and excavation. Material from three contexts - 22, 26 and 28/1 - in Trench 6 was of particular interest. The ditch/hollow, F28, contained several small flakes/blades as well as large secondary flakes among a total assemblage of 20 pieces. Larger flakes dominated the assemblages from layers 22 and 26 which overlay F28.

All three contexts shared a flake/blade-oriented reduction technique, typically using narrow and plain butts, and hard (probably stone) hammers. No contrasts were identified in raw material types. The flint was entirely consistent with the use of locally-available large nodules.

Retouch had been applied to one flake, an obliquely-blunted point of earlier Mesolithic date, in a similar condition to the remaining material. The overwhelming majority of the material, however, appeared to be Neolithic in character, as defined by the technological indicators. The small sample size and the absence of cores, however, makes the date uncertain.

The absence of primary flakes suggests that this is not a quarry site. Similarly, the absence of used or usable pieces makes a domestic function unlikely. Furthermore there are no refitting pieces. The contexts containing in situ flints can therefore be interpreted as peripheral to an area of domestic consumption where midden deposits were accumulating. Damaged edges on some flakes indicate that high-energy soil movement such as ploughing could be responsible for re-deposition of the assemblages.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

Animal bone

Three contexts from Trench 6 - pit fills 7/3 and 7/4, and ditch fill 10/1, produced small quantities of animal bone. This material has not been analysed, but has been retained in the site archive.

Charred plant remains

by Gillian Campbell

Two 10 litre soil samples were taken from trench 6 during the assessment. Both were from ashy layers in pits: contexts F7/1 and F8/2. The samples were floated over a 0.5 mm mesh; the resulting flots were scanned under a dissecting microscope at x10-20 magnification. Funds were not available for full analysis, but it was thought that brief examination of the material was

worthwhile both to establish the taxa present and the potential of charred plant remains for any future work on the site.

Preservation of the charred plant remains in each sample was good. The sample from pit F8, though dominated by charcoal, contained well-preserved cereal grains. Both emmer (Triticum dicoccum Schübl.) and spelt wheat (Triticum spelta L.) were present, as well as six-row hulled barley (Hordeum vulgare var. vulgare L.). The sample also included some hulled wheat chaff. This was poorly preserved, so that determination to species was not possible. As well as cereal grain the sample contained many large grasses, mainly brome (Bromus mollis type), but including some oat (Avena sp.) grains. Other weeds noted during scanning included cleavers (Galium cf. aparine), campion (Silene sp.) and vetch/tare (Vicus/Lathryus sp.). Tubers of onion couch (Arrhenatherum elatius spp. bulbosus (L.) Beauv. ex. J. & C. Presl) and fragments of hazelnut (Corylus avellana L.) were also present.

The sample from pit F7 contained fewer plant remains, though charcoal was still abundant. Among the cereal was some hulled wheat and at least one oat, though it was not possible to identify this to species. Other remains present included a single battered spikelet fork from a hulled wheat, a bud and also a possible fruit of sloe (Prunus spinosa L.).

DISCUSSION

The earliest activity on the site occurred in the Neolithic period. The flint debitage from hollow F28 and layers 22 and 26 consists of secondary flakes, suggesting that the flint was being knapped in the immediate vicinity, but not within the excavation area. The flint was available locally in nodular form; large, unworked nodules were found in Iron Age pits and postholes, in the latter case apparently used as post-packing. It has been suggested above that some of the flints may have reached their contexts by secondary action, ie ploughing. Nevertheless, taken with the evidence of earlier chance finds of flintwork, it is clear that the advantageous location of the Camp was recognised in the Neolithic period.

The spearhead found in 1901 (Cocks 1910, 437-8) suggests that the site may have been reoccupied in the late Bronze Age, but no evidence of this was forthcoming in the excavations. The earliest pottery belongs to the later middle Iron Age, typified by the Saucepan tradition. The Iron Age ceramics of Buckinghamshire are imperfectly understood (Waugh *et al.* 1974), but the assemblage from Danesfield Camp shows affinities with sites in Berks and Oxon as well as others in Buckinghamshire. The presence of a single, unstratified sherd of 'Belgic' grog-tempered pottery is the only suggestion of continuity of occupation into the late Iron Age, but this may simply be due to the limited collection programme.

One possible sub-circular structure, F43, was identified

from postholes. No positive dating evidence was recovered, so it cannot be definitely dated to the Iron Age. The recovery of daub from two middle Iron Age pits, however, indicates that structures were present at this time.

Little remains of the western circuit of the earthwork, but it is clear that all of the features recorded within the car-park area lie within the interior of the hillfort. It can be stated with some confidence, therefore, that the hillfort was occupied during the middle Iron Age. Continuity into the later Iron Age cannot yet be demonstrated with confidence, but given the topographical advantages of the site such continuity would not be surprising.

The possibility that the Thames marked the boundary between the territories of the Catuvellauni and the Atrebates in the late Iron Age has been raised elsewhere (Ford 1987, 80). The deposition of artefacts in the Thames during the Bronze and Iron Ages seems to be significant in this respect (Ford 1987, 80, 82), and indeed a number of Iron Age artefacts have been recovered from the reaches of the Thames immediately to the E and W of Danesfield Camp. If the Thames was a cultural boundary in the Iron Age, Danesfield Camp would clearly occupy a nodal strategic position.

The location of the hillfort would place it at the periphery of two zones, with the clear implication that it was controlling access from one to the other. The S side, with its sheer drop

to the N bank of the river, would be easily defensible; by contrast, the land to the N, E and W of the hillfort slopes away gently. It is also notable that a second earthwork exists only 1 km to the W, near States House, although the relationship (if any) between the two monuments cannot be determined at this stage. The density of Iron Age sites and find-spots within 10 km of Danesfield is low (Ford 1987, 78-82 for Berks; Waugh et al. 1974, 406-418 for Buckinghamshire); indeed, south of the river the nearest site known in 1987 lies almost 5 km away (Ford 1987, Fig. 28). Territorially, therefore, it can be suggested that Danesfield Camp lay at the southern edge of what was Catuvellaunian territory in the late Iron Age, controlling access from the Atrebatic lands to the south of the Thames.

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