Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 27/86

SOIL REPORT ON ASHELDHAM CAMP, ESSEX.

R I Macphail BSc MSc PhD

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Summary

Field examination of the buried soils at Asheldham Camp, suggests cultivation and downslope lynchet formation.

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Soil Report on Asheldham Camp, Essex

R I Macphail, 1986.

During the spring of 1985 the Iron Age camp at Asheldham, Essex, was excavated (director, Owen Bedwin) by the Essex County Council.

The site, which occurs just north of the river Crouch, is situated mainly (northern sector) on typical argillic gley soils (Hurst Association) developed on river terrace gravels, with a downslope area on stagnogleyic argillic brown earths on fine aeolian drift (Ratsborough Association; Jarvis et al 1983). The buried soils described from trenches B and D relate to these two soil types respectively (see Soil Profile Description). On the upper part of the site at trench B field examination (Plate 1) suggested that pre-rampart cultivation had homogenised the less stony topsoil here, possibly also inducing some erosion, as the soil seems quite shallow. This interpretation was supported by the rather thick Ap horizon described in trench D (Plate 2) which is in fact a colluvial lynchet deposit.

In short, there is good field evidence of cultivation and downslope soil movement beneath the ramparts at Asheldham Camp.

Reference

Jarvis, M.G., Allen, R.H., Fordham, S.J., Hazelden, J., Moffat, A.J. and Sturdy, R.G. 1983. Soils of England and Wales, Sheet 6, SE England. Southampton: Ordnance Survey.

Soil Profile Description: Asheldham

Trench B
Soil type: Typical argillic gley soil (Hurst Association; Jarvis et al 1983).
Slope: 2-3°W Altitude: c 21 m OD
Site: Neutral (Unit 1. Flood plain) (minor shedding)
Parent material: River terrace gravels.

horizon, depth cms.

Rampart - some 120 cms of brown soil and gravel.

Ap(?) 0-16 Dark brown (7.5YR4/4) weak sandy loam; common small and medium rounded stones; weak coarse blocky; few fine roots; moderately humose; sharp, even boundary.

(B)C 16+ Strong brown (7.5YR5/6) loose sand; abundant very small stones; structureless; rare roots; gradual, even boundary into river terrace gravels.

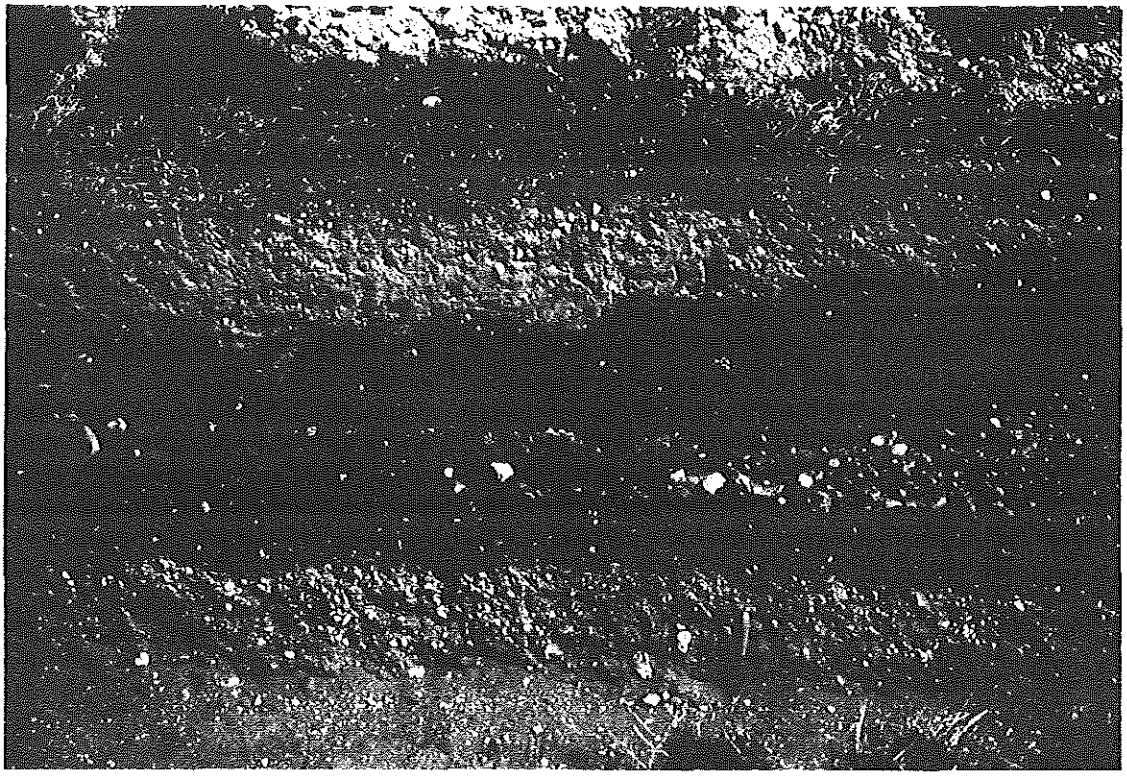
Trench D
Soil type: Stagnogleyic argillic brown earth (Ratsborough Association).
Slope: 4°S Altitude: 17 m OD
Site: Receiving parent material fine aeolian drift over London Clay.

horizon, depth cms

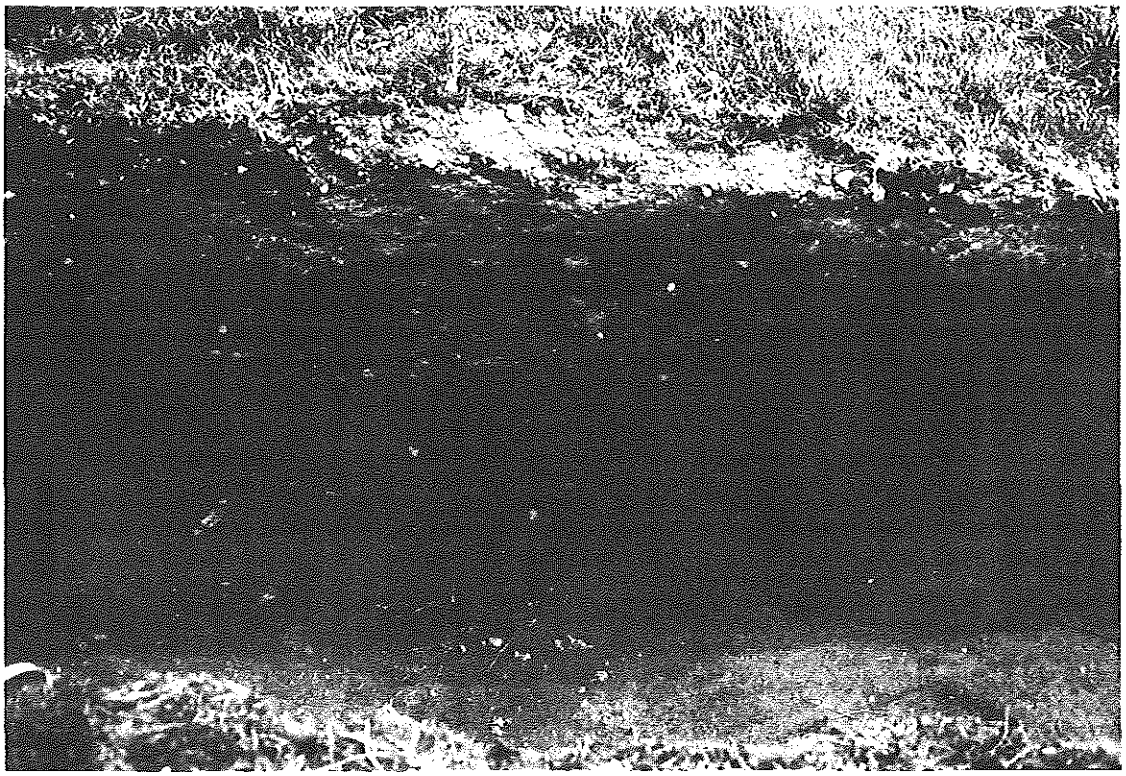
Rampart - some 30 cms of gravel and soil.

Ap 0-28 Strong brown (7.5YR4/6) weak sandy loam; few small stones; coarse subangular blocky to prismatic; few medium to common roots; clear even boundary.

Btg 28-48+ Brown (7.5YR5/4) weak fine sandy loam with abundant fine to very coarse mottles; stone free; poor coarse prismatic; gradual boundary to fine Ctg.



Trench B



Trench D