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REPORT ON VISIT TO SITE (16 SEPTEMBER 1975)1. Environmental Work

There are no suitable deposits on the site suitable for sampling for pollen analysis. The soil is too acid for mollusca to be present. A small amount of carbonised material, including hazel nuts and grain, has been recovered from the darker levels of Iron Age pits. Bone preservation is extremely poor.

Thus there is no possibility of obtaining evidence of the environment of the site in the past, but the carbonised material may yield information of a cultural nature.

2. Plough damage to archaeological features

The site is situated on Thames River gravels. The upper excavated area is on level ground on top of the hill, while the lower area is on the south-facing slope. The shallow topsoil (approximately 30 to 50 cms in depth) is similar to that seen at the nearby excavations of Mucking and approximates to the St Albans series.

The field is deep-ploughed every three years. The upper excavation area showed little plough damage, but the area on the slope has been considerably affected by ploughing. Many archaeological features - pits, postholes, burial pits, etc - have been deeply cut into by the plough and the damage is extensive.

It is interesting to note that the farmer apparently carries out deep ploughing of the area to break up panning. However, no evidence of pan formation (either iron or clay pans) was noted, apart from limited areas of iron-panning at the base of several ditch sections, which are much too deep to be significant. The archaeological features are of a much firmer consistence than the gravel into which they are cut, and it may be that these constitute the "pan" which the farmer is attempting to break up.

Conclusion

The present practice of deep ploughing is causing extensive damage to many of the archaeological features which make up this important multi-period site.

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17 September 1975