

## Notes and News

### MULTIPLE RAMPARTS: A NOTE IN REPLY

On a momentary return to England I see that Mr Colin Gresham has been writing on multiple ramparts in *ANTIQUITY* (June 1943, No. 66, pp. 67 ff.) and that Mr B. H. St. J. O'Neil has likewise touched on the subject in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1942, xcvi, pp. 16–17). At the end of his article Mr Gresham reaffirms an important difficulty of Mr O'Neil's in regard to the date 56 B.C., tentatively suggested by me for the Iron Age B re-building of Maiden Castle in its first multivallate form. 'This date he [Mr O'Neil] points out does not leave sufficient time for the "Hill-fort B culture" to move northwards and pass through the various periods noted at Ffridd Faldwyn Camp near Montgomery'. On turning to Mr O'Neil's extremely interesting and valuable report on Ffridd Faldwyn I find the statement:—

'He [Dr Wheeler] states his preference for the date 56 B.C. to mark the approximate beginning of the construction of large multivallate camps, such as Maiden Castle, Dorset, and is apparently unwilling to admit the possibility that the date can have been earlier than that by more than a decade or two.

The implications of this theory elsewhere than at Maiden Castle and its immediate surroundings are not touched upon by Dr Wheeler. If, however, the multivallate camps of the Marches derive their origin from a part of his Wessex, it must follow by this dating that they were all constructed between some date after 56 B.C. and the time of the Roman conquest at dates varying from A.D. 50 to A.D. 75. Some time must be allowed for the spread of the new weapon and its counterpart northwards, and account must also be taken of the size of some of the earthworks and of the time and numbers of men required to erect them. As already stated, Ffridd Faldwyn has three pre-Roman structural periods of the multivallate camp, and at Old Oswestry there are at least three structural periods, which belong to the same time. If, therefore, the implications of Dr Wheeler's dating are as has been stated above, and this conclusion seems at present inescapable, the evidence from excavations in Wales and the Marches must cause it to be considerably modified, since it does not allow sufficient time for the developments elsewhere, which are known to have taken place. An earlier initial date than 56 B.C. for multivallate camps in England is essential'.

Now let us get this matter straight and so avoid wasteful misunderstanding in the future. Mr O'Neil has unwittingly ascribed to me views which I have never held. I have never thought, said or written that all varieties and phases of the so-called 'Hill-fort B culture' were introduced into this country in or about 56 B.C.; nor have I for a moment suspected that 'the multivallate camps of the Marches derive their origin from a part of Wessex'. Mr O'Neil will fully appreciate this if he will glance at the summary of my views in my recent substantive Research Committee Report on Maiden Castle. This Report was not published until the end of 1943 and both Mr Gresham and Mr O'Neil therefore anticipated its appearance. But my statements on pp. 381–7 and elsewhere in that Report were written sometime between 1937 and 1939 and were incorporated, in substance, in at least one of my annual addresses to the Society of Antiquaries in that period.

## NOTES AND NEWS

Without enlarging again on details, let me repeat the main stages of my argument :—

1. Cross-channel trading by the Veneti of Brittany in pre-Caesarian times is explicitly recorded.
2. There is identity (tested by excavation) between multivallate earthworks in the Breton and the Cornish peninsulas. Such earthworks do not occur elsewhere in northern France.
3. In Cornwall these earthworks are related to the distribution of tin, and are reasonably associated with the Venetic cross-channel trade. If so they must in origin be of earlier date than the drastic Caesarian conquest of Brittany in 56 B.C. They may go back to the second century B.C. or earlier, but we do not yet know when they were first built.
4. In the small corpus of evidence at present available, there are suggestive hints of a connexion between Cornwall and multivallate earthworks in the lower Severn region and the Cotswolds. The local Iron Age B of the Severn-Malvern-Cotswold hill-fort area is marked by the use of currency-bars, which are apparently mentioned by Caesar. It is to be inferred therefore that this local phase of Iron Age B is also in origin pre-Caesarian—again, how much pre-Caesarian we do not know, but we may, if we like, postulate ample time for the spread of certain features thence to Montgomery and further afield.
5. Dorset, etc., was notably isolated culturally until the end of the Iron Age. (This point is discussed in my Report). ‘Wessex’ was practically devoid of tangible exports and imports at this period; its economy was based upon agriculture and distinctively local industries. Within these limitations the population prospered and was already, during Iron Age A, to some extent nucleated in extensive earthworks. Only at one moment prior to the Belgic period do we find the clear impact of new and foreign ideas; manifested suddenly by the drastic revolution of military methods of attack and defence, and more gradually by the introduction of new types of domestic equipment. The military innovations are generally similar to those which we have already seen in Brittany, Cornwall and the Severn region; but their scale is somewhat exceptional and may be ascribed, first, to the magnitude of the existing defences on which they were superimposed, and, secondly, to the high initiative and authority of the new command. The economic isolation of the region makes it clear that the new rulers did not come as traders; the immediate but gradual penetration of associated innovations—notably, the metallic bead-rims and the Breton countersunk handles of the pottery—indicates a minority intrusion with few craftsmen: and at the same time the nature of those innovations, almost unparalleled elsewhere in Britain, precludes the supposition that we are here dealing merely with a culture-spread from Cornwall or the Cotswolds. A variety of general considerations combine to suggest the ascription of the episode (the beginning of ‘Maiden Castle B’) to the middle of the first century B.C. At that period, the picture of a powerful minority, coming as settlers and rulers but not as traders, with foreign (Breton) rather than British contacts, controlling and influencing, but not replacing the native population, tallies remarkably with the sort of situation which is likely to have been created by Caesar in 56 B.C. in his systematic purge of the powerful tribesmen of Brittany. I suggest the association of ideas, but I have no desire to over-emphasize it and my general dating does not hang on it.

## ANTIQUITY

It will be seen that, so far from claiming any sort of chronological priority for Maiden Castle in the matter of multiple ramparts in Britain, I have placed it at the bottom of my short list. Thus in his footnote in *Arch. Camb.* as cited, p. 17, Mr O'Neil commends me for showing (in *Antiquaries Journal*, XXII, 1942, 266-7) 'a welcome appreciation' of the difficulties of a view which I have in fact never held.

Finally, let me make it clear that, whilst the infallibility of the factual evidence from Maiden Castle is an article of my creed, I should be the last to maintain the impeccability of the provisional deductions, whether mine or anybody else's. After much thought, they seem to me, as stated in my Report, to form a logical explanation of the evidence as it stands, but I have no doubt that, when I return to England in five years' time, archaeologists will have garnered a mass of new corrective (or even confirmatory) evidence. I may perhaps be permitted to wish their labours every success, and only ask now that their efforts be directed to real rather than to supposititious difficulties.

R. E. M. WHEELER.

### WINGHAM VILLA AND ROMANO-SAXON POTTERY IN KENT

Mr A. G. Wells has done right to call attention (*ANTIQUITY*, 1943, XVII, 210-2) to the evidence provided by George Dowker's account of the 1881 excavations for the post-Roman occupation of the villa at Wingham, Kent. As a supplement to his note it may be worth recording that there is at least one object preserved from these excavations which can be used to illustrate Dowker's reference to the 'coarse black pottery, apparently belonging to culinary vessels' which he regarded as one indication that the 'site was occupied by a semi-barbarous people'. This is a fragmentary vessel in the Maidstone Museum of which a section is shown (p. 53, 3). It bears a label which reads, 'Thick urn from Wingham Villa: Saxon'? It is an undecorated hand-made jar of rough, hard, gritty, ware, brownish grey in colour, and with a smoothed surface which may once have been burnished. The whole of the rim is unfortunately missing. The base is fairly flat but markedly asymmetrical, the section being considerably thicker on one side than the other. It is ornamented on the outside with a roughly wiped cross, a feature which can be paralleled both in Roman and in pagan Saxon pottery.

Whether this vessel can be properly described as Saxon, I am not prepared to say. Neither the form nor the fabric is sufficiently distinctive to make the attribution certain. It is, however, a very queer pot to find in a Roman villa. The suggestion on the label may mean little more than that the excavators correctly recognized it as being quite out of place among their Romano-British potsherds. If they had only recorded the exact position in which it was found in relation to the other supposed indications of post-Roman occupation we should be better able to assess its significance. As it is we must wait until the adoption of Mr Wells' suggestion that the villa should be re-excavated before we can hope for an explanation of the presence of such a vessel in a Romano-British building.

It may also be relevant to note that among the pottery in the Maidstone Museum from the nearby Romano-British cemetery on Dearson Farm, Preston-next-Wingham (1), are two other vessels which seem out of place in a Romano-British context. These are shown (p. 53, 1, 2). The first is a small hand-made vessel in rough grey ware of the same general form as that from the Wingham villa; its base is, however, more rounded, and sags slightly, a common feature in Saxon pottery. Like the Wingham villa pot, it has lost the whole of its rim, but this evidently occurred in ancient times, for the neck

<sup>1</sup> Described by George Dowker in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 1878, XII, 47-8.