Seeing differently: Rereading Little Woodbury

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Schlagwörter: *Historiografie / Arbeitstechniken im Feld / Quellenkritik / national(istisch)e Archäologien / Gebäudetypen und Rekonstruktionen / Rundhäuser*
Keywords: *Historiography / fieldwork technique / source criticism / national(ist) archaeologies / building types and reconstruction / roundhouses*
Mots-clés: *historiographie / technique du travail de terrain / critique des sources / archéologies nationales (-istes) / types de construction et reconstitution / maisons*

> Curiously enough, one cannot read a book; one can only reread it (Nabokov, "Lectures on Literature", 1980)

This effort requires situation. Looking back to this seminal site – Gerhard Bersu's (1889–1964) excavations of eighty years ago and, then, my youthful appraisal to mark its fiftieth anniversary[1] – my interest in Little Woodbury and early-day forays into the subject's historiography were entirely 'present-ist'[2]. Preparing to write-up the Haddenham Project findings[3], I wanted to know what were both the intellectual and more pragmatic roots – the 'baggage' – of its major components: first, its great causewayed enclosure and, then, the Iron Age roundhouses that survived so well on one of its sites[4]. By what basis were these 'types' interpreted and how had any understanding of them been achieved?

In the case of Haddenham's roundhouse settlement, Bersu's Little Woodbury excavations of 1938 and 1939 was the obvious starting point *(fig. 1)* and, with it, his dismissal of the ubiquitous 'pit dwellings' that had long-dominated Britain's prehistoric settlement architecture:

> "On this subject archaeologists have waged a stubborn battle. Clearly the imaginative appeal of the pit-dwelling is very great … Reason, however, prosaic, has triumphed in the end and banished the pit-dweller from our history"[5].

Embarking on that appraisal, the extraordinary conditions under which the fieldwork was conducted – both political (i. e. the war) and its disciplinary context (e. g. the rise of functionalism) – soon featured as much in the 1989 paper as Bersu's own excavation techniques and interpretative framework.

Going on, thereafter, to consider Bersu's Isle of Man roundhouse sites[6] and, too, the formulation of British archaeology during the war and its 'modernist' aftermath[7], in the years since there have been a number of site-specific historiographical exercises. Including David L. Clarke's (1937–1976) sole excavation project, Great Wilbraham in Cambridgeshire[8],

[1] Evans 1989.
[2] Murray / Evans 2008.
[3] Evans / Hodder 2006.
[4] Evans 1988; 1989.
[5] Hawkes / Hawkes 1943, 93; see *fig. 5*.
[6] Evans 1998.
[7] Evans 1995.
[8] Evans et al. 2008.

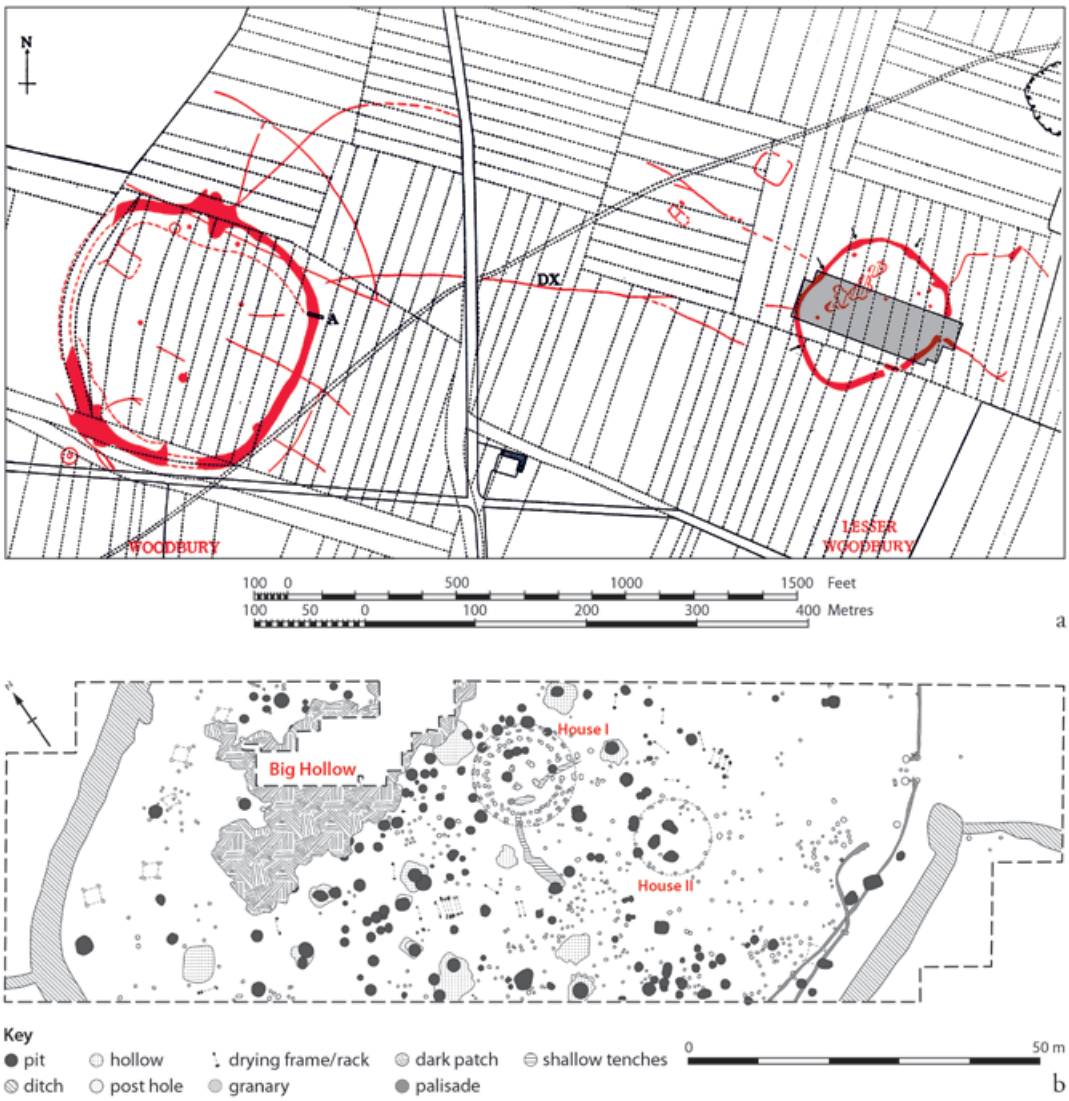


Fig. 1. Woodbury's (a) aerial photographic plotting (Bersu 1940a, fig. 1) and (b) simplified site base-plan (from Chapman / Wylie 2016 fig. 2.1).

such efforts eventually coalesced into the Cambridge Archaeological Unit's "Historiography and Fieldwork" series, of which Mucking's excavation volumes are its foremost outcome to date[9]. Paraphrasing Foucault, the abiding premise behind this initiative is straightforward: we now dig 'after origins', and as much in relationship to what has been written and thought about any entity- / component-type as what is actually in the ground before us during excavation. Of this contribution's Nabokov motto, any 'grounded reading' of remains now must involve rereading a vast amount of literature. Meaningful fieldwork entails a commitment to seriously 'read sources'[10], as various trajectories and networks of books, reports and people invariably lie behind major sites, just as they amass in their

[9] E. g. Evans et al. 2016.

[10] See, e. g., Spacks 2011 on "Rereading".

wake. Whatever insights this historiographic approach may have garnered, at its root it is essentially the same as informed the 1989 paper[11]. How does archaeological fieldwork assemble its knowledges and then acknowledge that 'a thing' is understood?

I have no desire to here simply dust off and rewrite the 1989 paper. Demonstrating how change can come about in the discipline, since that time the 'story' of Little Woodbury has become something of an oft-told tale[12]. This contribution will, nonetheless, briefly review facets of the site's background and what fostered its extraordinary reception and impact. It then considers just how Bersu assembled the site and, particularly, his formulation of its 'types'. With thirty years hindsight, source-criticism plays a greater role, and the shortcomings of his approach now seem more apparent: what he overlooked, omitted and misunderstood.

Whatever critique there may here be of Bersu's methods, one can only respect his work and what he achieved. This is certainly not, though, a matter of construing an 'ancestral genealogy' or any kind of progressive meta-narrative of field archaeology's development. If anything, Little Woodbury serves in opposition. It highlights what can come about through rupture – foreign introductions – and dispute; this being something that the often-repetitive sameness of so much of today's current professional-standard archaeological practice could do well to recognise.

A visual record

More than three decades on, returning to the Bersu's Woodbury archives many of the things that strike you are the same as before. Its German has still to be translated, but then that does not matter greatly as his site record was not primarily 'textual'; his notebook entries are succinct and largely given to the immediate day's events (site visitors, *etc.*). Yet, the choice of their language is itself telling of their purpose. Bersu could, after all, write a reasonable English if they had been meant for 'others' (i. e. 'sponsors' and fellow practitioners). While held by Historic England, these amount to his 'personal records' and, in effect, what sources he would draw upon to write-up the excavations. The idea that site records constitute a public source of documentation in their own right simply did not exist then, that only really arose in Britain during the 1970s[13]. Indeed, one finds it hard to imagine that Bersu could conceive that others might actually wish to reassess his fieldwork[14].

Within Woodbury's 'archives' there are many of Bersu's hallmark section drawings. Rendered in the coloured sketch-style that Mortimer Wheeler (1890–1976) took such umbrage with, these are 'familiars', as is the idea that Bersu was a 'visual thinker'[15]. What strikes you now, on perusing the material again, is just how prominent is the site's photographic record. Going through the collection boxes, first there are his pocket-sized record notebooks relating to his travels in Britain in 1932, '35 and '37. This is not so much a personal chronicle as a tour-gazetteer of major sites and monuments, with each getting a page of spidery text and a small glued-in contact-negative photograph.

[11] Evans 1989.

[12] E. g. Lucas 2001, 43–44; Lucas 2012, 215–216; Davis 2011, 172–174; Chapman / Wylie 2016, 62–68.

[13] See Evans et al. 2016, 18–23 on the rise of 'official' site archives and the nature of notebook recording (vs. context sheets).

[14] See, though, Bradley 1994 on Bersu's reappraisal of Collingwood's King Arthur's Round Table investigations: Bersu 1940b.

[15] Evans 1998; see also Bradley 1996 on 'seeing'.

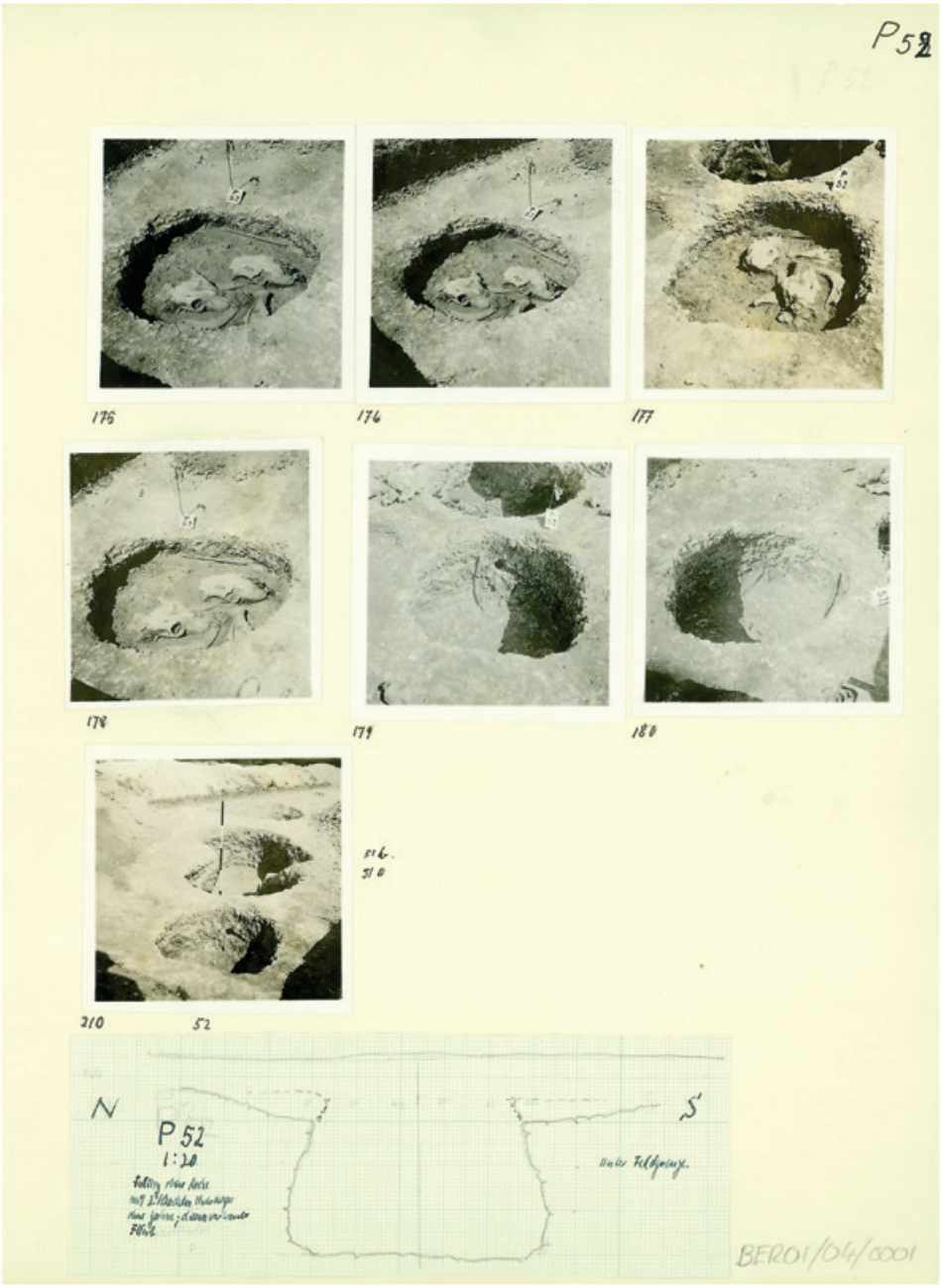
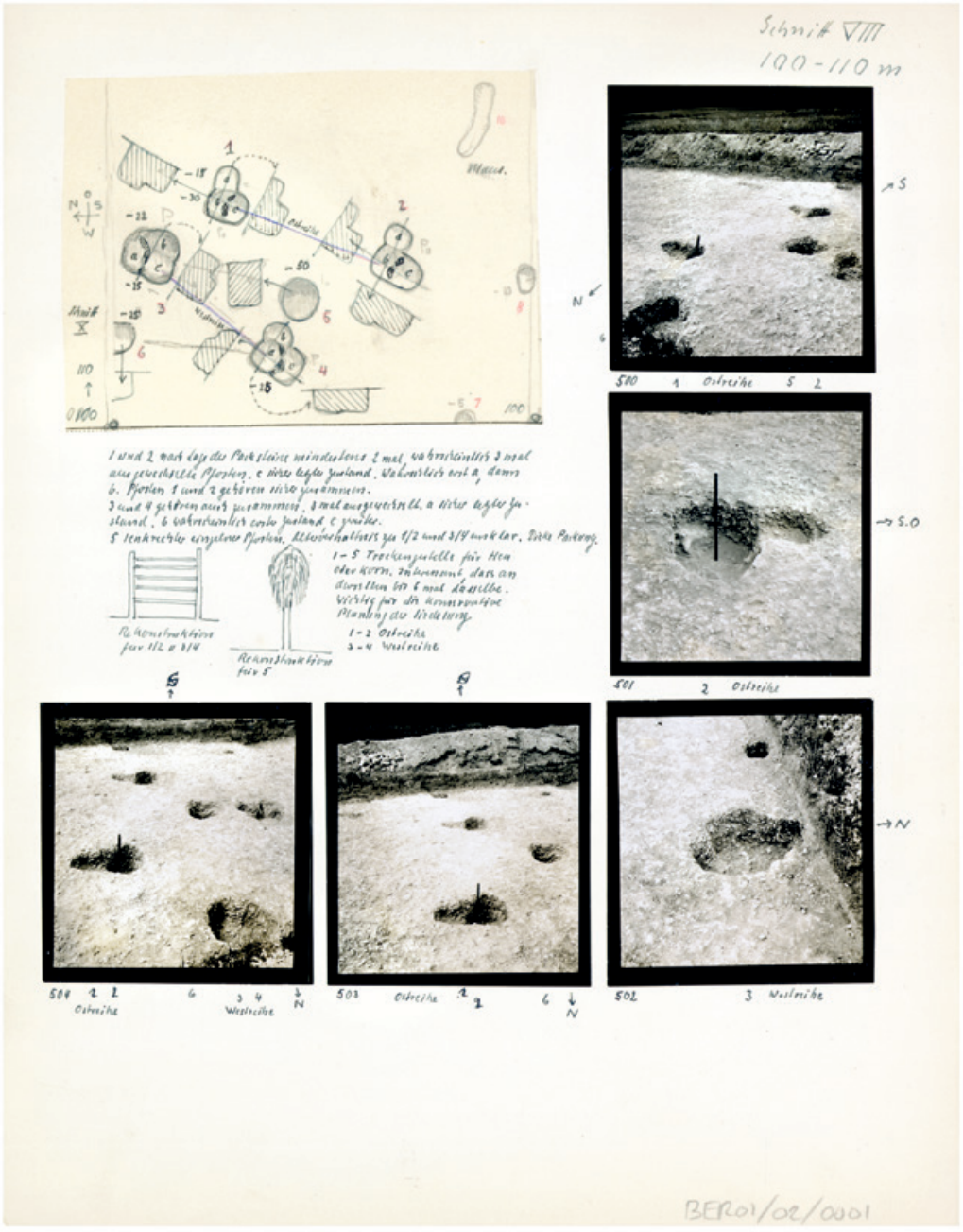


Fig. 2. Archive record sheets: Pit 52, (a) notice animals skulls in upper fill and (b) corn rack posthole settings (see Bersu 1940a, fig. 29; Historic England [HE] Archives, BER01/02,04/0001).

Proceeding through the boxes, there are then Bersu's many Kodak photographic negative albums. These are comparably small, with each page originally holding just one negative (they have almost all been removed; see. e. g. Bersu 1940a, pls IV; VI; VII). Thereafter, there are files of newspaper clippings and a few aerial and site photographs. Eventually, in the third box, there are the record sheets. Along with the site's pencil-rendered graph paper base-plans (kept in a separate large folder), these are the heart of the site's records. Generally, the sheets are of separate ditch cuttings or individual pits, each getting at least



b

Fig. 2. Cont.

one loose page *(fig. 2)*. These have their graph-paper sections stuck on; the fill sequences are annotated by Bersu's hand, with usually two to five photographs added. Amounting to hundreds of prints, the site's photographic record was clearly intense. Between this, the sheer number of negative albums and the character of the travel notebooks, you are reminded of the scale of O. G. S. Crawford's (1886–1957) photographic archive[16] and

[16] Hauser 2008, ix–xiv.

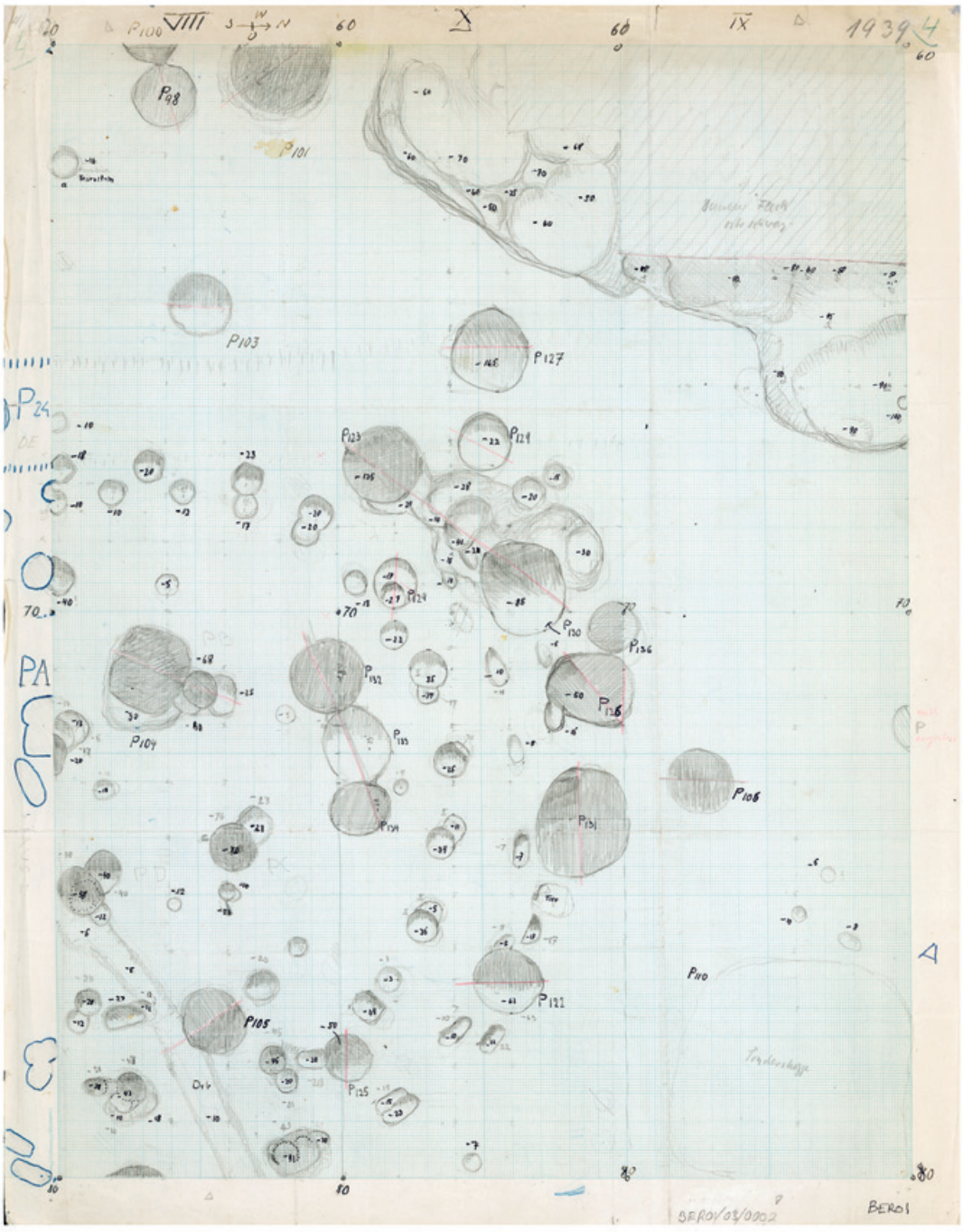


Fig. 3. Original base-plan rendering of House I northwest-sector features (with non-'P'-prefixed numbers indicating feature depth; HE Archives, BER01/03/0002).

what it was to then have this media widely available through the day's reasonably priced cameras.

Other aspects of the site's records deserve notice. One is the base-plans and their shaded, depth-suggestive pencil rendering. In terms of British archaeology, this seems to almost to hark back to the oddly abstract lunar-like style of such sites as Standlake a century

before. Conversely, influenced by Bersu, and in contrast to Wheeler's advocacy of more hard-edged – 'precise' – hachuring conventions[17], Grimes in some of his wartime Heathrow figures adopted a comparably 'soft' style[18] and the graphics style of Christopher and Sonia Hawkes' (1905–1992 and 1933–1999) Longbridge Deverill Cow Down in the 1950s was close to Little Woodbury's[19]. Yet, there was nothing radically new in Bersu's renderings. They are of entirely the same ilk as, for example, he earlier employed in his account of Lochenstein's Neolithic–Iron Age settlement[20] and, as we will see, also in "Köln-Lindenthal"[21].

By what seems their omission, another noteworthy element are the postholes. Given Bersu's renown as a posthole excavator, where is their record? Although you cannot now ever be certain that the 'archive' is not today missing specific components, postholes seem to have no separate record or sections. Instead, their depths have simply been indicated on the main plans *(figs 3; 12)*.

A significant intervention

The choice by the Prehistoric Society to excavate Little Woodbury, a c. 1.5 ha sub-circular settlement enclosure located on chalk near Salisbury, Wiltshire, whose clear aerial photographic register showed an eastern antennae-ditch entrance – with a larger enclosure visible some hundreds of metres to the west – has been outlined in the earlier paper[22]. Equally, with the circumstances of Bersu's displacement to Britain now widely known and further detailed in Harold Mytum's chapter below[23], there is little cause for their reiteration[24]. It is said that Little Woodbury occurred under police surveillance[25]. Yet, this apparently was not primarily due to Bersu's involvement but rather his connections with Vere Gordon Childe (1892–1957), who was then under secret service investigation[26]. Bersu's involvement nonetheless evidently brought complications and the Prehistoric Society's Minute Books for March 1938 record:

> "The Hon. Secretary raised the question of the Research Fund in view of the serious turn recently taken by international events. He suggested that in any case it would be wise to withdraw the name of the Society's archaeological adviser for the Woodbury excavations [Bersu] from the printed appeal since this would fit in with his own known desire for a minimum of publicity[27].

[17] Wheeler 1954, 78.
[18] Grimes / Close-Brooks 1993, e. g. fig. 7.
[19] See Brown 2012, e. g. figs 2.29; 2.44.
[20] Bersu / Goessler 1924.
[21] Buttler / Haberey 1936.
[22] Evans 1989, 442–443.
[23] See also Mytum 2017.
[24] In a spirit of appropriate revision and self-correction, based now on Mytum's extensive archival researches it would seem that in my earlier efforts Bersu's status as a refugee were over-exaggerated (Evans 1989; 1998). He was caught up in Britain during the war due to circumstances and, not forced out from Germany, was more an 'accidental émigré'. Just as – having nowhere else to profitably go – the later years of his interment on the Isle of Man were essentially voluntary. As outlined in Mytum's contribution, helped by Childe, Bersu spent the winter of 1939–40 in Blairgowrie, Perthshire, where Woodbury's text was written. He acknowledged that it was W. Thorneycroft who enabled the report to be written. This is Wallace Thorneycroft (1864–1954), the Scottish geologist, businessman and mining engineer, who collaborated with Childe experimenting on the vitrification of Iron Age forts (Childe / Thorneycroft 1938).
[25] Phillips 1987, 67.
[26] Hauser 2008, 224.
[27] In the autumn of that year, due to the 'uncertainty of the world situation' and the problems of raising sufficient funding, the Society's Minutes note it was then estimated that, as a minimum, £ 600 would

That year's fourteen week-long season involved some thirty participants. With both Charles Phillips (1901–1985) and Stuart Piggott (1910–1996) as the site's experienced 'old hands', Little Woodbury was essentially intended to be a training school and, for example, both the then-young Sheppard Frere (1916–2015) and Katherine Kenyon (1906–1978) attended. Bersu was to receive a weekly stipend of £ 5 (plus expenses; rising to £ 8 in 1939, plus his travel from Berlin). The first season had a budget of just £ 330 (it apparently overran by £ 12), and Bersu complained that its staff only included eight paid labourers and not the 15 he requested. Amounting to only a poor 'flagship', its funding was certainly not lavish, especially when compared to Maiden Castle whose annual budget was three to four times that[28]. This is further evinced in that the funds did not extend to having spoil removed via a system of railed carts, as was then widely employed on Continental sites[29] and which had been used in Wheeler's 1928 Carleon excavation.

Little Woodbury is widely held to be amongst the first large open-area exposure of a prehistoric site in Britain. This is, however, just mythology. As detailed in its 1940 report, without the benefit of topsoil-stripping earthmoving machinery – that only arising through wartime investigations[30] – the site was dug in alternative 5 m-wide strips *(fig. 4)*. Its ultimate plan as a (partial) 'whole' was never seen in the ground. While the picture its c. 7000 sqm presented was far more intelligible than so many of the era's dispersed trench-exposures, in point of fact, by whatever means (their methodology not being detailed), at All Cannings Cross the Cunninghams achieved an extensive 3200 sqm exposure[31].

be required to finish the site, with Grahame Clark suggesting that Bersu's role be changed to a more consultative capacity (i. e. having less direct site involvement). Held in Bodleian Library, Bersu's letters to Crawford indicate that relations between Clark and Bersu were not always cordial (see also Evans 1998, 198 no. 2):

"I am still occupied with Woodbury … I regret very much, that you had the troubles with Phillips. It is a pity with him as he is really no bad man, but abnormal. And then the bad influence of Clark, which is for me always like an incarnation of evil (I do not know why). But there is no doubt as we saw in the case of Woodbury, that he has this bad influence on C. W. P. I am with him in rather good relations, we write very sensible letters, sends books also. But I am careful in my letters, knowing now how to handle him" (26.1.1940; MS. Crawford 64.4); C. W. P is Charles William Phillips (1901–1985), whose appraisal of Bersu's character was equally not entirely complimentary (Philipps 1987, 66–69).

[28] Wheeler 1943, 2–3.

[29] Kooi / van der Ploeg 2014 figs 18; 19; see Evans 1989, fig. 2.

[30] E. g. Grimes / Close-Brooks 1993, 308–309; see T. Evans 2016.

[31] Cunnington 1923. – Using 3–4 labourers, between 1893–98 and 1904–06, at a total cost of just under £ 700 Arthur Bulleid (1862–1951) and Harold St George Gray (1872–1963) cumulatively excavated c. 0.8 ha at Glastonbury, but which, as a lakeside settlement, was atypical of the British Iron Age (Coles / Minnitt 1995, 7–10). Stripped using machines in 1944, Grimes' Heathrow site was just shy of a hectare (Grimes / Close-Brooks 1993, 308), whereas Wheeler's largest Maiden Castle settlement-area exposure was c. 585 sqm (Site B). As mentioned in the earlier paper (Evans 1989, 444), Bersu and Wheeler are known to have visited each other's sites. (Dennis Harding relates Hawkes' telling of how delighted he was on hearing Bersu protest, when together visiting Maiden Castle, that if people had actually sat around hearths in the bottom its larger pits then they would have surely suffocated!) While Wheeler nevertheless still clung onto some degree of pit occupation (Wheeler 1943, 52), he did recover Iron Age roundhouses at Maiden Castle. Most notably were Site D's 'hutments' (Wheeler 1943, 91–96; pl. VIII). These were generally defined by posthole-marked stone wall- and floor-defined small circles; elsewhere, curvilinear gully-settings – some, at least, probably surrounding roundhouses – were not attributed as such, but rather related to rainwater catchment (Site B; Wheeler 1943, 81; pl. VII). He also excavated a series of more polygonal / sub-rectangular posthole settings (Huts DH & DM; Wheeler 1943 pl. VIII) and, in the case of Site L's Hut 1 (of Iron Age A / 'ultimate Hallstatt' date), compared it to Bersu's Goldberg structures (Wheeler 1943, 124–125; pl. XX, fig. 2; see Jope 1997 and, also, Bersu 1940a, 90 no. 3).

Fig. 4. Site strip-dug exposures: (a) Köln-Lindenthal (Buttler / Haberey 1936, II, fig. 4) and (b–c) Little Woodbury, House I-area, 1938 (HE Archives).

The style of that site's presentation is not authorative; the key point being that, as a stratified Late Bronze Age midden settlement, the definition of All Cannings' structural elements was highly ambiguous. Not at all like Little Woodbury's straightforward house-plan recovery, and Bersu in fact made a virtue of the site's simplicity: "… in the present state of research, *it is more important to excavate systematically sites of simple character* than to conduct operations on sensational and complicated sites"[32]. As related below, in order to achieve such ready intelligibility Bersu crucially overlooked the site's more 'chaotic' elements.

[32] Bersu 1940a, 30; emphasis added.

Bersu's Woodbury fieldwork amounted to a significant 'foreign' intervention within British prehistory, one seeing the importation of current German excavation techniques[33]. In some respects, parallels could be drawn with colonial archaeologies; Wheeler in India, and all that he tried to impose, being an obvious example amongst many[34]. Nearer at hand, other such instances could be cited. Amongst these would be Prof. Albert Egges Van Giffen's (University of Groningen) excavation of a stone circle at Ballynoe, in County Down, Ireland in 1937 and 1938. Apparently first seeing the monument while touring in Ireland five years before, he then met a local amateur archaeologist, Miss M. Gaffikin, who suggested its digging and then worked closely with him. The fieldwork was never completed (like Little Woodbury) and, only published three years after Van Giffen's death[35], therefore had limited immediate impact[36].

Little Woodbury amounted to something altogether different. Not only was this due to its orchestration – its 'official' Prehistoric Society sponsorship, British Museum involvement and 'big name' endorsement (Childe, Hawkes and O. G. S. Crawford) – but that it was published in its time. Beyond this, and unlike colonial comparisons, it was a matter of introducing another European nation's practices to a country that already had its own established archaeological traditions. As crucial is that it was widely promoted as a catalyst of change and that there was then a widespread desire to do archaeology differently. Equally important, though, is that Bersu delivered such a *convincing performance*. This was not just the result of the coherence of the site's 'big plan view' and the manner in which he articulated its parts (i. e. 'types'), but that he made empathetic statements about the past. Much like how he evaluated Collingwood's King Arthur's findings[37], foregoing conventional courtesy, he dismissed out-of-hand what he held to be erroneous interpretations of the period's other settlements[38].

The 'style' of Little Woodbury's reportage also contributed to establishing the site as a significant turning point in British archaeology. Apart from Bersu's interim report on the first season[39], under the headline, 'Excavations at Little Woodbury', it was published in five parts over a ten year-span within three volumes of the "Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society":

[33] Writing to Thomas D. Kendrick (1895–1979) at the British Museum (4.9.1938), Bersu related: "I regret very much that you had no time to come over to Salisbury to see our dig. Dr Stevens was a very agreeable compagnion *[sic]* to us and he worked very well, *and I am absolutely satisfied about the results of our excavation. Nothing revolutionary but many new lights for Iron Age A and its civilisation, just that what I liked as a foreigner to have as results*" (emphasis added; publishing in 1934 the Highfield pit-dwelling settlement, Frank Stevens (1868–1949) was the curator of the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum; see *fig. 5*).

[34] Wheeler 1954.

[35] Groenman-van Waateringe / Butler 1976.

[36] Van Giffen's and other Dutch prehistorians' barrow investigations (e. g. van Giffen 1938) did, though, have enormous impact within Britain (e. g. Clark 1936b; Piggott 1939). – Following independence in 1922, with the demise of British influence and Ireland's growing Celtic nationalism, it welcomed 'foreign' archaeological investigators; for example, Harvard's Mission, that excavated 17 sites between 1932–36 (Carew 2018) and – from Copenhagen – there were Knud Jessen's (1884–1971) palaeoenvironmental studies (e. g. Jessen / Farrington 1938; see Mahr 1937, Gazetteer A). Adolf Mahr (1887–1951) was primarily responsible for this. After working on Vienna's Hallstatt collections, in 1927 he was appointed as the first Keeper of Irish Antiquities in Dublin's National Museum. He instigated many excavations, convincing the government to fund fieldwork using unemployed workers. President of the Prehistoric Society in 1937, Mahr departed to Germany in July of 1939 and had allegedly been head of Ireland's Nazi Party (Evans 1989, 440; Mullin 2007 and Stephan / Gosling 2004).

[37] Bersu 1940b, 189–190.

[38] Bersu 1940a, 102–104; Bradley 1994, 32.

[39] Bersu 1938.

1940 (Vol. 6)
I) G. Bersu, The Settlement …
1948 (Vol. 14)
II) J. Brailsford, The Pottery
III) J. W. Jackson, The Animal Remains
1949 (Vol. 15)
IV) J. Brailsford, Supplementary Excavation, 1947
V) J. Brailsford, The Small Finds, with Appendices: Ceramic Spectrometry (H. B. Bolton) Quern Petrology (K. C. Dunham), Cereal Grain Impressions (A. H. G. Alston), Pottery Residues (H. Barker), Human Bone (J. C. Trevor) and Charcoal (F. L. Balfour-Browne).

Amounting, in total, to over 120 pages, the site's publication was thorough. Due to the war, however, the protracted production of its specialist studies fragmented the results, dividing artefactual and structural evidence[40]. Yet, in relationship to what was to become standard report formats[41], Woodbury's balance differed. At 82 pages, its first 'Settlement' instalment is long – two-thirds of the total – and fully details the site's constituent parts. Extending to observations of snail types and earthworm-action, close attention was paid to feature-fill processes. It was also copiously illustrated, having 20 full-page figures (plus eight half-page). While perhaps not particularly beautiful, they certainly convey technical competence. This is especially true of its fold-out base-plan (see *fig. 12*) and, throughout, the quality of Woodbury's illustrations markedly contrasts with the simplified cartoon-like style of many of the day's settlement-site reports (admittedly not, though, Society of Antiquaries' publications).

Settlement and national archaeologies – German experience

Woodbury's is not the only report to feature here, as behind it lies "Köln-Lindenthal" by Bersu's students, Werner Buttler (1907–1940) and Waldemar Haberey (1901–1985). Published in two volumes by the Römisch-Germanische Kommission in 1936, it outlined the 1930–34 excavations by Cologne's Wallraf-Richatz Museum of a major *Linearbandkeramik* (LBK) enclosed settlement[42]. Apparently involving upwards of 100 labourers at any one time *(fig. 4)*, this was excavation on an enormous scale and eventually exposed 'long' buildings across some c. 3.5 ha. Its significance here is two-fold, both for how it reflects upon Little Woodbury itself and the volume's impact in Britain[43]. As to the first, given its pedigree, it is only to be expected that the two sites shared traits, and Little Woodbury's German technique-influence was explicit in its stated objectives:

> By excavating the site completely many problems raised by the numerous partial excavations of analogous sites might be solved. In particular, *profiting by previous experience in Germany*, it was hope to reveal something of the nature of such settlements and of the social organisation which they imply[44].

[40] Only a proportion of the site's faunal assemblage was ever examined, with many of its bones disappearing due to the war (Brailsford / Jackson 1948, 19).
[41] Bradley 2006.
[42] Buttler / Haberey 1936.
[43] An English summary appearing in "Antiquity" of that year: Buttler 1936a.
[44] Bersu 1938, 308; with emphasis added; see also, e. g., Harke 1935's 'The Hun is a Methodical Chap' paper on German practice.

With Köln-Lindenthal's main base-plans hachure-rendered, it also had 'soft shade-style' sections and close-up plans[45], and it, too, had been alternate strip-exposed *(fig. 4)*. When in Woodbury's text Bersu refers to 'Danubian' parallels, this was primarily to Köln-Lindenthal, especially as regards the interpretation of pits as subterranean roofed structures[46]. There is, though, irony in this. While its characteristic longhouses were detailed[47], these were held to be barns and their flanking quarrying hollows – akin to smaller versions of Woodbury's working hollows – were actually interpreted as elaborate 'organic-plan' pit dwellings, *Grubenwohnungen*[48] *(fig. 5)*, with this interpretation only later dismissed by Oscar Paret[49].

Of Köln-Lindenthal's reception in Britain, its publication was fulsome, with comprehensive finds analyses and quality illustration. It was certainly well-received, with British prehistorians expressing a degree of envy. Reviewing it in "Antiquity", Childe remarked:

> "The information to be expected from such a complex excavation is naturally of quite a different order from that obtained by test-sections through ditches and dwellings, such as hitherto contented British and Continental archaeologists …
> Altogether the book is impressive testimony to the skill and devotion of its authors, to the foresight of the Römisch-Germanische Kommission of the German Archaeological Institute and *the enlightened patriotism of the State* and municipal authorities. The result is a precious contribution to prehistory – not only to the solution of special technical problems such as the determination of culture-sequences and house-types, but also to the more humane study of the economy and social structure of a neolithic group"[50].

Indeed, Childe's conclusion all but pre-figured what was attempted at Little Woodbury:

> "But have we in the British Isles yet reached the stage, achieved in Germany by the innumerable small excavations of the past, when we should turn from section-cutting and testing to concentrate on operations which must last over many seasons and absorb large sums?"[51].

Clark was equally effuse in his praise of their work[52], while also acknowledging the quality of, for example, van Giffen and Hatt's fieldwork respectively in Holland and Jutland[53].

In response to what had been the many previous sequence-focused hillfort defenses and barrow excavations, the Congress of Archaeological Societies' Peers Research Committee report of 1930 had called for an 'archaeology of the living' to supplement that of 'the dead'. This emphasis on settlement archaeology in the decades bracketing the Second World War reflects the day's emergent 'new functionalism' within Britain. Relating to trends in social anthropology (and sociology), it championed a more holistic, 'flesh-and-blood' archaeology. Embracing such themes as reconstruction, organic preservation and 'folk'/ethnographic and house studies, its abiding concern was with *the function*, and less with form (i. e. 'formalism'), of artefacts and settlement features:

[45] E. g. Buttler / Haberey 1936, II, figs 16–20.
[46] Buttler / Haberey 1936, I, 60–64; II, fig. 33; see also Buttler 1936b.
[47] E. g. Buttler / Haberey 1936, II, fig. 34.
[48] Buttler / Haberey 1936, I, 39; II, 30.
[49] Paret 1942.
[50] Childe 1936, 502; 503; emphasis added.
[51] Childe 1936, 504.
[52] Clark 1936a.
[53] Clark 1937.

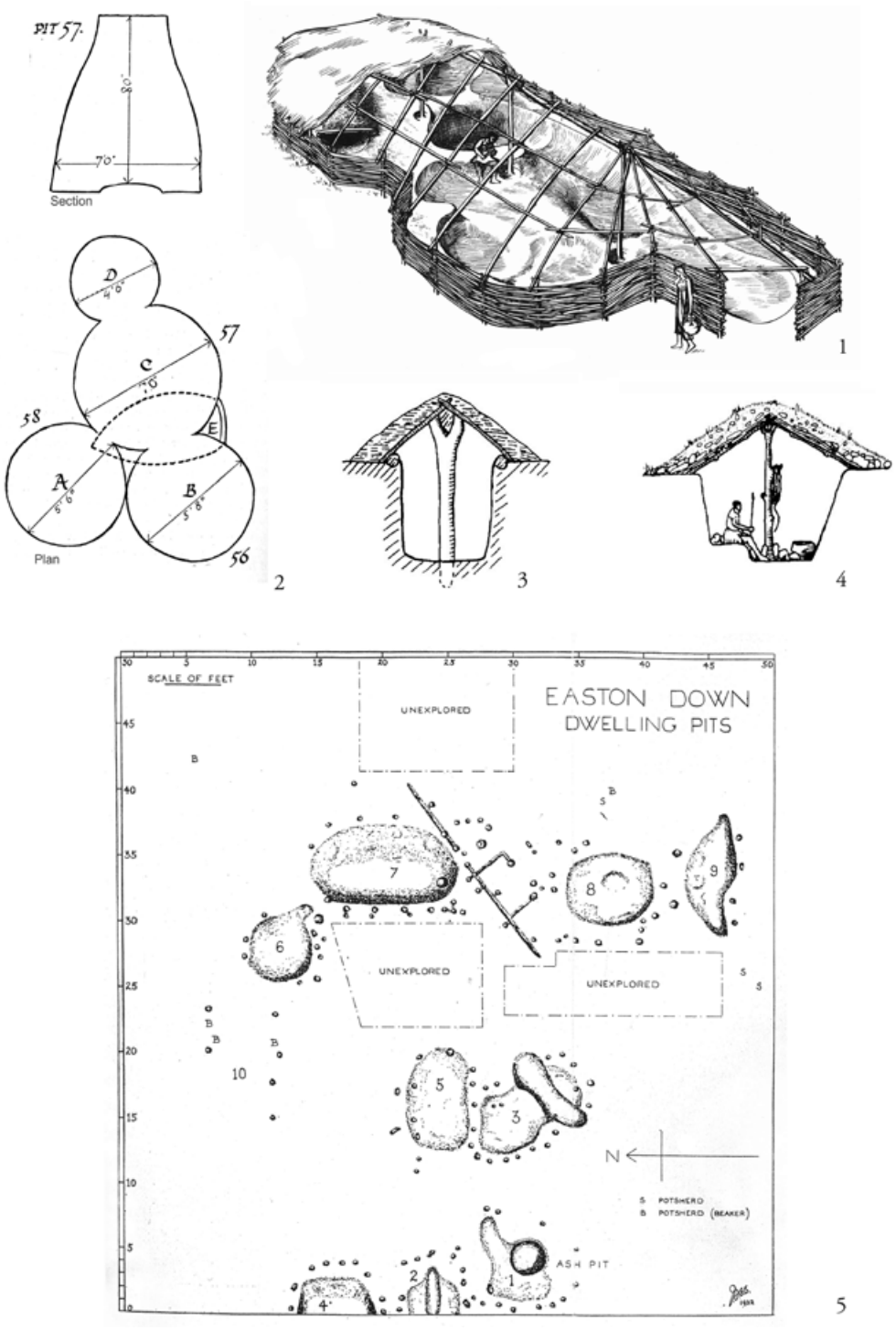


Fig. 5. Pit-dwellings: (a) Köln-Lindenthal (Buttler / Haberey 1936, II, fig. 30); (b) Highfield, Fisherton, Salisbury, quadruple pit group ('dwelling with attached stores'; Stevens 1934 fig. 5); (c) Piggott's 1935 reconstruction of the 'long pit-dwelling' found beneath the Kemp Howe barrow; (d) roofed Hungarian potato storage-pit (Buttler 1936b, fig. 6); e) plan of Easton Down, Wilts., pit dwellings (Stone 1933 pl. IX). In demonstration of the proliferation of pit dwelling settlements within Britain prior to Little Woodbury, appearing in the same 1932–34 volume of *The Wiltshire Archaeology & Natural History Magazine* (No. 46) as both Stevens' Highfield pit dwelling study (Stevens 1934) and Stone's 'Three "Peterborough" Dwelling Pits … at Winterbourne Dauntsey' report (Stone 1934) was Stone's Beaker-attributed Easton Down settlement (Stone 1933, 228–234). The latter is relevant not only for the manner in which its excavation methodology is detailed (Stone 1933, 229) but that the arrangement of the 'stake-holed furrow between Huts 7 and 8' was directly compared to Bersu's Neolithic houses at the Goldberg (Bersu 1937) and that Bersu had apparently sent Stone photographs and sketch plans of his buildings (Stone 1933, 232 pl. IV).

> "Our aim is the reconstruction of past life, and since that centres on the house, we are particularly interested in houses, and regard finds as subsidiary … Formerly we classified habitations as hut-circles, pit-dwellings, brochs, forts and the like. *Now we realize that it is our business to get behind the outward form to the function*"[54].

Largely arising in relationship to issues of funding, there were also political dimensions – both disciplinary and world-stage developments – behind the espousal of settlement archaeology and, with it, Little Woodbury. Subsequently formulating an *anti-nationalistic* archaeology (i. e. 'Archaeology against the State'[55]) that eventually propelled his trans-global World Prehistory[56], in the later 1930s Clark expressed considerable admiration for the German's National Socialists' promotion of archaeology[57]. This essentially came down to a need for state-funding for archaeology in Britain, which was then largely a matter of either wealthy individuals (e. g. Lt. General Augustus Pitt Rivers [1827–1900] and Alexander Keiller [1889–1955]) or else the Society of Antiquaries. Wheeler had commanded much of the latter's resources and, thereby, support for his later Iron Age / Roman archaeology and its emphasis on stratified (vertical) sequences to establish chronologies. It was in reaction that – inspired by Little Woodbury – a more 'horizontally concerned', younger 'sociological school' of archaeology was to coalesce[58], effectively one of settlement excavation in contrast to that of hillforts[59].

Type logics – building parts and context

Type-formulation and its reasoning was fundamental to the subject's formative practices[60]. In order to assemble sites, 'things' were first delineated before attempting to interact them. Invariably involving a degree of caricature – like Lévi-Strauss' 'animals' – *types* 'are good to think with, too'; even if, through regional and temporal variability, they are widely prone to eventually breakdown (but with their complete death-knell being rare as it requires as much mass-agreement as for their creation).

A range of sources were cited by way of Little Woodbury's interpretative comparisons. For storage pits, apart from the 'pit caches' of Omaha Indians (based on Smithsonian Institution Reports), he alluded to Medieval instances in Hungary and their contemporary use in Romania[61], with the latter reflecting Buttler's researches there[62]. Interpreting Little Woodbury's two-post drying racks and four-poster granaries, Bersu cited contemporary examples of haystack settings in Holland and raised pig sties in Bulgaria[63]. Bersu was widely travelled at a time when 'traditional' peasant farming practices still existed throughout much of Europe and he clearly was a keen observer of these. Beyond this, concerning the roasting of corn, he quoted Samuel Johnson's 1883" Observations of Scotland's Western Isles" and, for storage pits, he cited Near Eastern sources such as Gertrude Caton Thompson (1889–1985) and Elinor Wight Gardner's

[54] Crawford 1953, 145; emphasis added; see also, e. g., Crawford 1921 and Clark 1937.

[55] Evans 1995.

[56] Clark 1943; 1954; 1961.

[57] Clark 1938; 1939, 194–203; cf. Clark 1943, 119 no. 5.

[58] Hawkes / Hawkes 1947, 167.

[59] Despite such 'new era' intentions, when the Hawkes' excavated Longbridge Deverill Cow Down in the 1950s its stripping was performed by hand (machine hire-costs then surely being prohibited) and Wheeler grid-boxes were still employed (Brown 2012, 13–16 fig. 2.8).

[60] See, e. g., Evans et al. 2009 and Lucas 2012, 169–214 respectively on 'types' and 'entities'.

[61] Bersu 1940a, 60–61.

[62] Buttler 1936b.

[63] Bersu 1940a, 97.

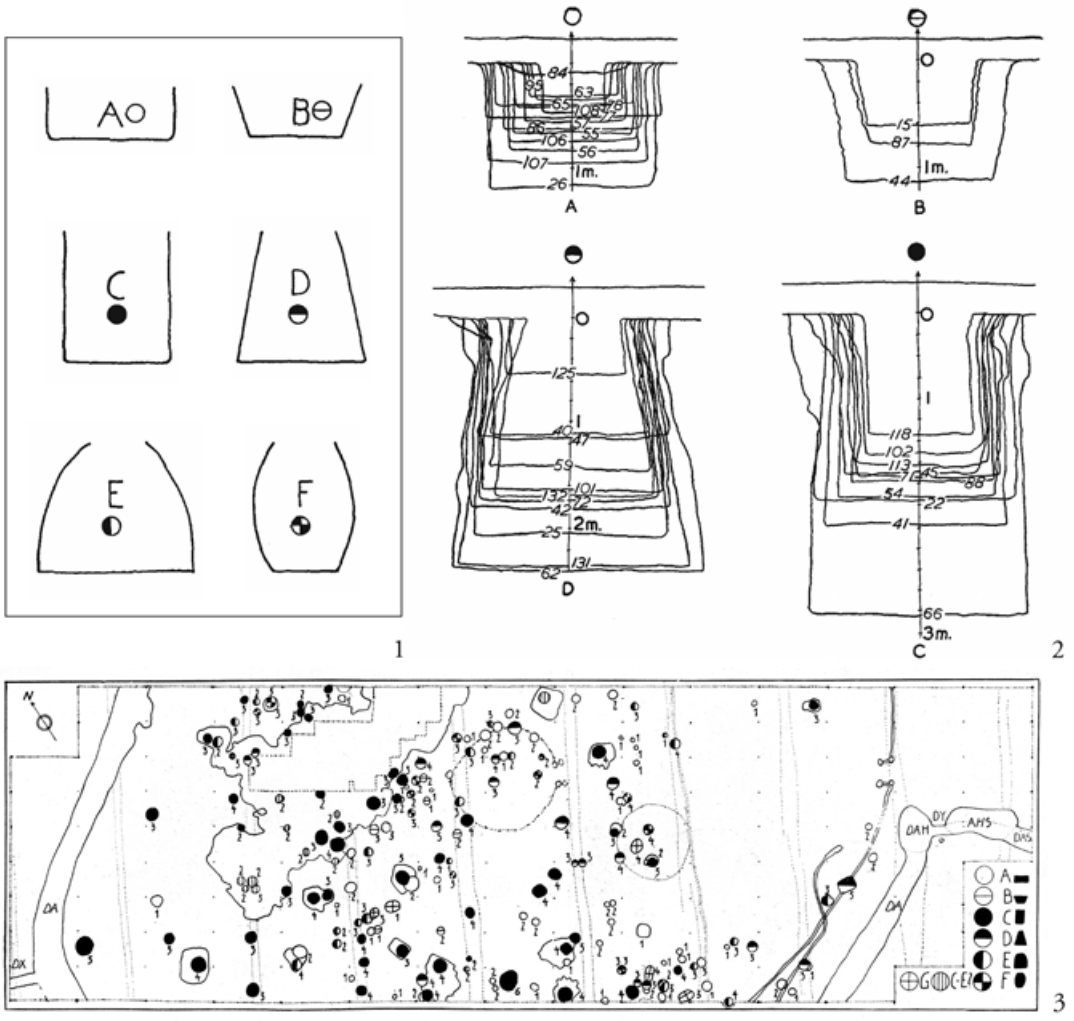


Fig. 6. Little Woodbury pit types (1) their respective depth profiles (2) and, (3) distribution plan (Bersu 1940a, figs 9; 10; pl. III).

(1892–1980) "The Desert Fayum" of 1930. Whilst for the settlement's working hollows – replete with their 'benches' – he drew upon his own observations of contemporary Egyptian village-life[64].

Bersu's analysis of the site's some 190 excavated pits was remarkably sophisticated[65]. Prior to discussing their function, they were first allocated to one of six lettered 'type-forms' based on their profiles (A–F; *fig. 6*). Each category was then tabulated according to depth-indices and their respective frequencies provided. Their soil-fabric types and dominate artefact inclusions were outlined, with the depositional dynamics of a number then detailed. Not only was a distribution plot provided of the pit-types[66] – a major 'first' within British archaeology – he also addressed their differential aerial photographic register. Arguing that while this offered no precise basis of establishing the number or type / form of pits across the settlement's

[64] Bersu 1940a, 77.
[65] Bersu 1940a, 48–64.
[66] Bersu 1940a, pl. III.

unexcavated portions, he relatively calculated (based on the presumption that their numbers were no greater along its uninvestigated margins than in its dug core) a total of around 360 deeper pits. Variously reckoning that six or twelve might have been open at any one time, and working out their average cubic- and bushel-storage capacity – while duly admitting that all this must carry much uncertainty – he concluded that, despite the number of pits present, it "does not indicate a settlement in which the harvest of a large community was stored"[67]. This was fundamental to his interpretation of the site. Although Bersu's calculations have since been duly critiqued, that is beside the point. No one had previously attempted such an analytical exercise in British archaeology, and, for example, there is nothing comparable in Wheeler's "Maiden Castle"[68]. Bersu's step-by-step logic was compelling and he clearly demonstrated how data could be deployed to illuminate prehistoric settlement life.

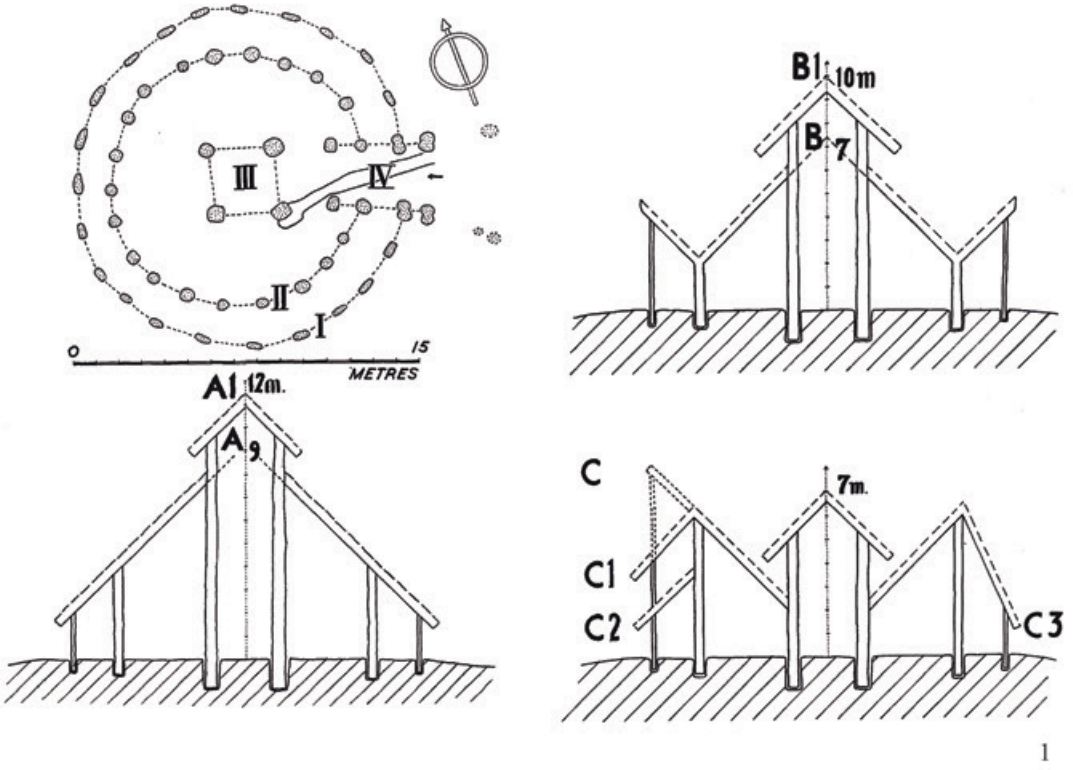
Despite its rebuilding, given the clear pattern of its postholes the distinction of the site's great c. 15 m diameter roundhouse (House I) was straight-forward. It had been found in the first season *(fig. 4)* and, therefore, there was no need to attribute any 'dwelling' to subterranean features (e. g. hollows or pits); this he dismissed on the grounds that any occupation debris within them had clearly been redeposited[69]. Although complicating House I's interpretation by postulating both outer and inner wall-lines (the latter running between the uprights of its interior post-ring[70]), his approach was 'architectural':

> "It is the duty of every excavator to attempt a reconstruction of the buildings he has found, despite the many uncertain factors involved. Speculations of this kind often lead us to notice features in the soil, which we should otherwise have overlooked. Many a building, believed to be completely excavated, would be recognised as not so if only the excavator had tried to reconstruct its mode of building"[71].

He rejected an earth-roof solution on the grounds that it would have had to of been ground-connected and that the building's postholes showed no such evidence. Accordingly, he assumed a straw-thatch roof and, with it, a proverbial 45 degree minimal inclination. Based on this, he then presented three main reconstruction variants *(fig. 7, A–C)*. The first – what is essentially the now 'classical' / simple roundhouse form (but with a central clear-storey) – he discounted on account of its unwieldy 9 m height (plus a 12 m-high clear-storey 'lantern'). As shown on *figure 7*, the other two had much more elaborate zig-zag roof profiles. Of these, 'B' was thought unlikely given the structural challenges of its rainwater pooling and for the connection of its outer wall. Remarkably, it was the equally complex Reconstruction C that he most favoured, with the C3 the preferred roof-variant (this being the only version to have a sketch isometric rendering of its standing form within the site's records / archives; *fig. 7, bottom*).

Citing indigenous instances of both North American Omaha earth-lodges and the huge straw-roofed circular 'halls' amongst Brazil's tribes, Bersu stressed that, limited to only ground-plan evidence, possible (upstanding) ethnographic parallels for the reconstruction of prehistoric houses can only be employed in a 'very cautious manner'. After acknowledging that there were then no close archaeological exemplars for Little Woodbury's main house-plan, he then turned to Oelmann's *Haus und Hof* studies[72] and its *laws* concerning the development

[67] Bersu 1940a, 64.
[68] Wheeler 1943, 51–54.
[69] Bersu 1938, 310; 1940a, 54.
[70] See e. g. Pope 2007, 217–22 and Sharples 2010, 182–183, fig. 4.3 on roundhouse 'peripheral space'.
[71] Bersu 1940a, 84.
[72] Oelmann 1927.



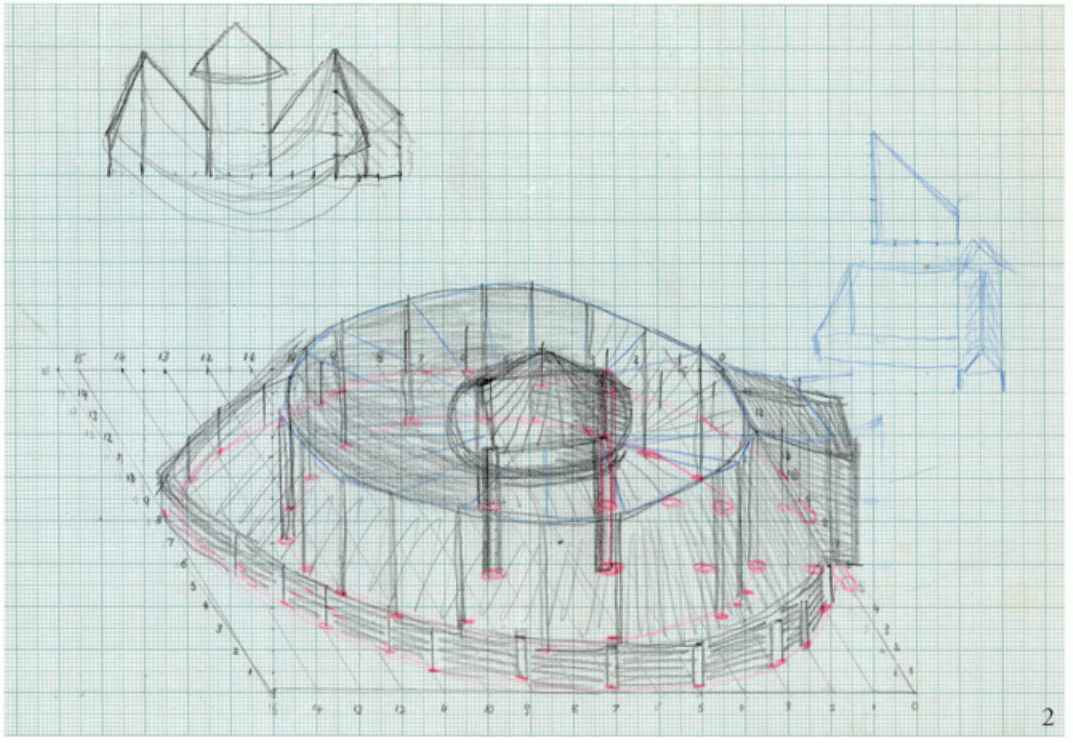


Fig. 7. (1) Bersu's House I A–C reconstruction variants (Bersu 1940a, figs 25; 26) and (2), isometric sketch-rendering of C3 Variant (HE Archives, BER01/03/0001).

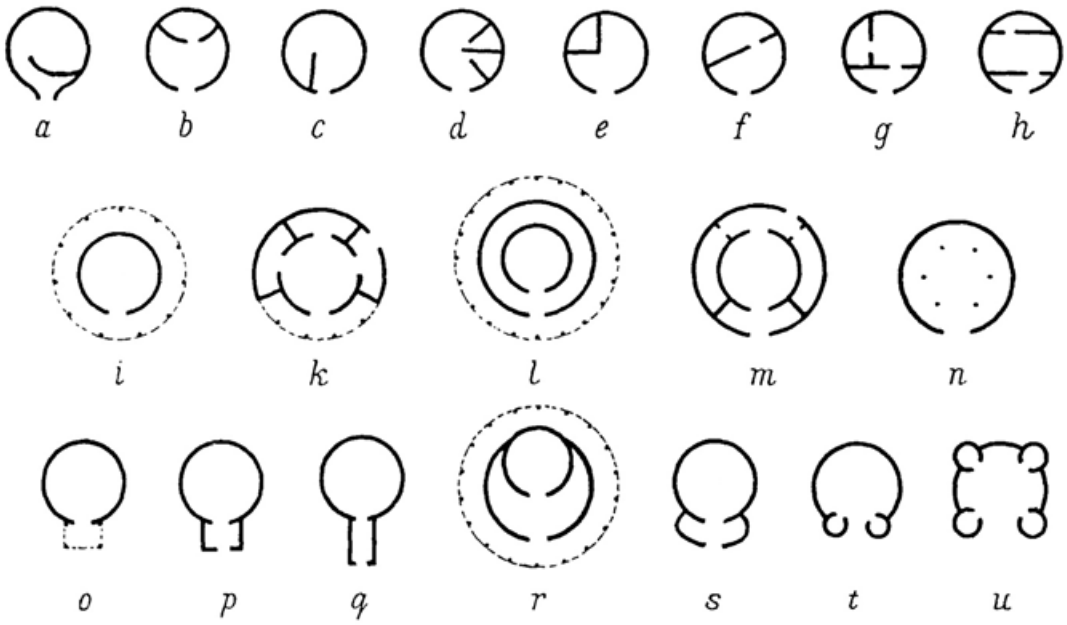


Fig. 8. The sub-divisions of individual and communal roundhouses (Oelmann 1927 fig. 13). Like Bersu, the excavators of Köln-Lindenthal drew upon Oelmann's studies:

> "In compiling the report on the 'band keramik' settlement at Köln-Lindenthal it was found necessary, in order to elucidate many of the finds, to compare them with ethnographic material from settlements peopled by primitive peasants in modern Europe. This method proved no less helpful than when employed earlier by Oelmann, Menghin and others in dealing with other prehistoric studies. …. For, owing to the conservative character of the peasant, modern primitive peasant cultures have retained certain structures and institutions which are derived, without a doubt, from archaic, even Neolithic prototypes. Comparison of modern material with our prehistoric by no means postulates a direct historic connexion between the two, especially when the objects compared are widely separated in place, culture, nationality and race" (Buttler 1936b, 25).

Working for the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn (eventually appointed as its Director), and with his second "Haus und Hof" volume seeing 18 editions between 1927 and 1973, see, for example, Smith 1978 on the importance of Oelmann's work for Roman villa studies (see e. g. Kohl / Pérez Gollán 2002 concerning Oswald Menghin).

of domestic architecture. Amongst these were that conical-roof buildings with perpendicular walls did not descend from simple round structures, whose roofs must touch the ground, but were a secondary roundhouse-form variant and "belong to a series of buildings evolved from primitive forms of the rectangular building"[73].

He further cited Oelmann's researches that roundhouses with central four-set roof posts ultimately derived from rectangular huts and lean-tos, and basically saw this as developing from out of courtyard-like arrangements:

> "If we are right in thinking that our round house with four posts in the middle is the result of the coagulation of a farmstead composed of individual buildings, round a central court-yard, then the funnel roof slanting inwards that we chose in reconstruction C3, would find a parallel in the roof of the *Altrium Tuscanum*. Here is a further

[73] Bersu 1940a, 90; see *fig. 8*.

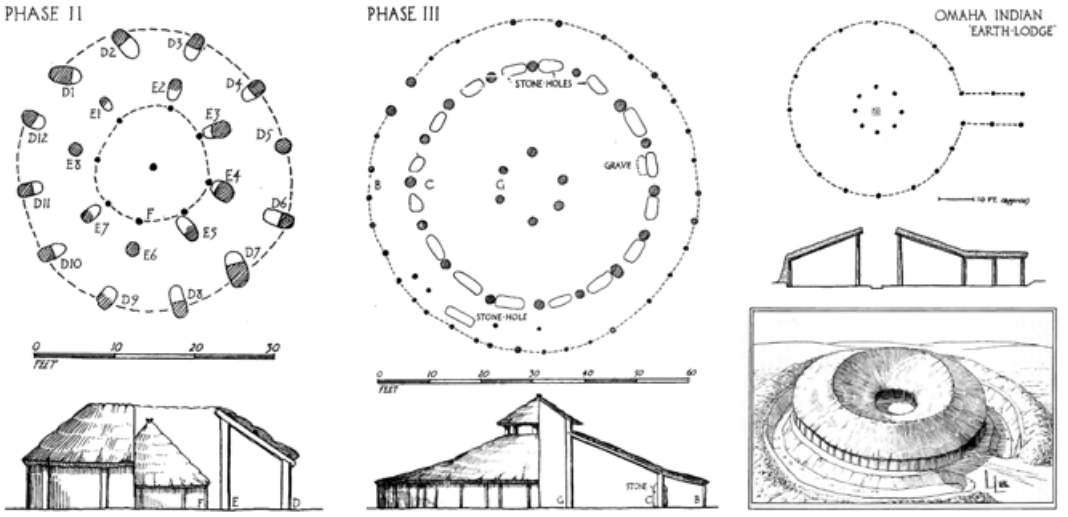


Fig. 9. Piggott's henge-form reconstructions (plus an Omaha Earth-Lodge; Piggott 1939 figs 3–5; 9). Tested in the course of the Durrington Walls' 1966–69 excavations (see Musson 1971), Piggott's explicitly Woodbury-inspired henge reconstructions have had a much greater longevity than Bersu's House I roof designs.

> reason for not connecting our house with the earth-covered houses with conical roof of the northern conifer forest-zone, but with the forms of house with this kind of roof belonging to the western Mediterranean.
> Thus, the conclusions suggested by the study of house forms indicate solution C as the most probable reconstruction. The size of the house and the absence of other individual buildings, such as stables and houses for the servants, are evidence that we are right in believing that the prototype of our house was a circle of huts with lean-to roofs and individual functions belonging to the farmstead; right too in thinking that the house represents an advanced stage of development of this primitive form, both the chronological and structural point of view"[74].

Leaving open the question whether this house-form first came to England with the arrival of 'Iron Age A civilization' or arose from older indigenous forms, underpinned by Oelmann's studies, this is certainly not how the origins of Britain's roundhouse tradition are envisaged today.

As outlined in the next section, Bersu courtyard-derived design did not really 'stand' for any length[75]. Oddly enough, where it saw a later manifestation was in Clark's post-war excavation of West Harling's Early Iron Age settlement in Norfolk, which explicitly occurred to further Woodbury's 'agenda'[76]. Its report considered at length the problems of roofing its c. 49 ft (c. 15 m) diameter gully-set Site II structure. A completely roofed solution was there also rejected on the grounds of its 'loftiness' and, making reference to Piggott's recent Woodhenge

[74] Bersu 1940a, 92.

[75] Held in the Manx archives, in a 1942 letter to Bersu Hawkes related that "You will remember that Stuart [Piggott] and I still have doubts (and they are shared by others too) about the Woodbury house reconstruction. I wonder what you think about this question now?" By way of comparison, though, see the reconstruction drawing of Fison Way, Thetford's c. 12 m diameter, two-storey Late Iron Age 'temple' (Building 2; Gregory 1991, 48–52; 194–196 fig. 152).

[76] Clark / Fell 1953, 1–2.

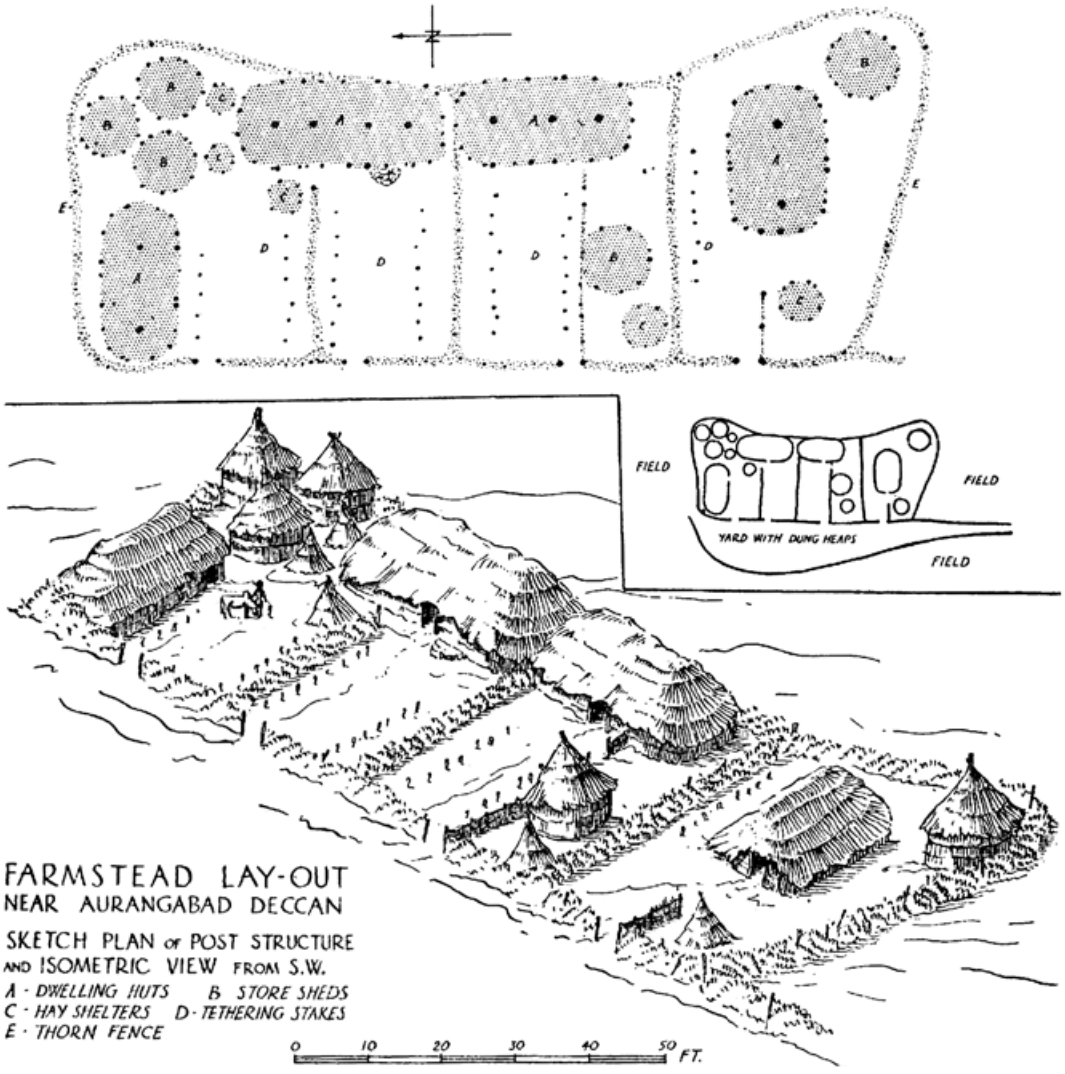


Fig. 10. Inspired by the experience of working at Little Woodbury and Bersu's use of modern-day 'primitive' agricultural analogies (i. e. the ethnoarchaeology of extant 'simple cultures'), while stationed in India during WWII Piggott sketch-recorded contemporary farmsteads. Published in "Antiquity" in 1945, he directly cited their post-settings in relationship to Woodbury's: "Many of the small stake-holes would be likely to become undetectable in the course of centuries, while rebuilding, alterations and additions to the simple primary settlement would in a generation of two, produce the maze of post-holes seen on such a site as that of the Late Bronze Age on Thorny Down, Wilts, or in the Iron Age on the Little Woodbury site" (Piggott 1945, 156).

reconstructions[77], a penannular structure with an inner open yard (i. e. 'donut-like') was tentatively proposed.

Piggott's 'Timber Circles: A Re-examination' considered Britain's main, later Neolithic timber henge monuments, Woodhenge and The Sanctuary, and their multiple concentric rings of posts[78]. He introduced that paper declaring that his inspiration was directly as a result of working at Little Woodbury and acknowledged his indebtedness to Bersu. Drawing upon

[77] Piggott 1939 figs 7; 8.

[78] Piggott 1939.

exactly the same interpretative sources – Oelmann, Brazilian communal houses and Omaha lodges (with an illustration of the latter, whose central opening was said to be 'forerunner of the Pantheon'[79]) – it included accomplished reconstruction illustrations *(fig. 9)*. These variously involved courtyard arrangements and, for The Sanctuary's Phase III completely roofed c. 64 ft / 19.5 m span, a raised central lantern that he directly related to that of Little Woodbury's house[80]. Concluding that the circles were great ritual buildings (and that Stonehenge fossilized in stone the same techniques), Piggott's interpretations reflect the wholesale application of the Bersu's reasoning, whose analytical framework was, in effect, *universal*, at least within a tradition of circular construction. Not culturally/chronologically determined, this clearly was compelling at time when there was so little immediate archaeological context to draw upon (i. e. 'pattern'; see *fig. 10*)[81].

Revisions and phasing

In the light of the quality of Little Woodbury's excavation and the lucid arguments that lay behind Bersu's interpretation of its great House I, how is it that he could have been so utterly wrong in its (Variant / Solution C) reconstruction? This, in part, comes down to that he was unable to draw upon other convincing exemplars. Pattern / precedent is, after all, the abiding logic of so much archaeological practice and reasoning. Unable to draw upon later British prehistoric settlement-component 'types' necessitated their creation and – like the LBK *Grubenwohnungen* – in theory, *when nothing is established anything is possible*. Yet, almost reminiscent of New Archaeology's more extreme 'rules', Bersu was equally guided by a need for some 'absolutes': variously Oelmann's building-development laws and that straw-thatch must have a 45 degree inclination. It was these that logically generated what would since be held as that house's absurd form.

In Woodbury's Acknowledgements Bersu related that Piggott "continued to make models of the more important structures on the site, so that an instructive series on a uniform scale is now available"[82]. These unfortunately cannot be located and are probably no longer extant; the only illustrated model known of the site did not show its House I as reconstructed but, rather – akin to model-renderings of the previous century (e. g. Standlake) – the site's features as dug (i. e. in base-plan form[83])[84].

Piggott's structure-related modeling would have been attuned to Bersu's 'architectonic' concerns, as he had building-reconstruction models made both for his Goldberg structures[85] and, later, the enormous Ballacagen roundhouse he excavated on the Isle of Man *(fig. 11)*. Having evidently also entertained a complicated 'pavilion-style' roof design for the latter[86], he eventually had it shown as a turfed dome. As part of Jacquetta Hawkes' joint Ministry of Education and Information film of 1944, *The Beginning of History*, Little

[79] Piggott 1939, 204.

[80] Piggott 1939, 203–204.

[81] Based on the recovery of Beaker, Piggott actually attributed these settings to the Early Bronze Age. The paper also considered the concentric post-settings beneath Dutch round barrows on the grounds that they might have related to circular buildings (Piggott 1939, 215–219); as well as Britain's prehistoric roundhouse remains generally, it separately reviewed the evidence of four-poster granaries, including an illustration with two of Woodbury's (Piggott 1939, 218–221 fig. 14).

[82] Bersu 1940a, 110.

[83] Stone 1958 pl. 68; see Evans 2008, 155.

[84] In a letter to Brailsford at the British Museum (16.1.1947) Bersu related that the model of House I's framework shown in J. Hawkes' 1946 paper (pl. II) was not that rendered by Piggott and, rather, had been made directly anticipating her film's full-size reconstruction.

[85] Bersu 1937 pl. 36.

[86] Evans 1995 fig. 4.

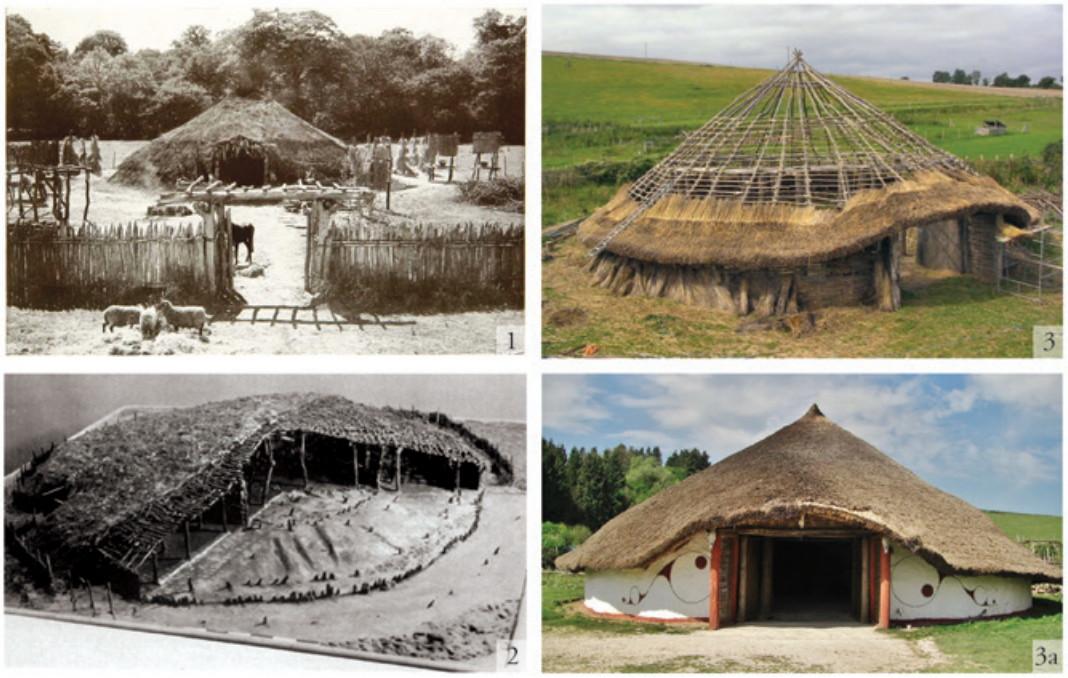


Fig. 11. Roundhouse reconstructions and 'appearances': (1) the Pinewood Studio version of Little Woodbury's House I (its turf-roof was apparently carried on four 'clad' central iron girders, and not timber posts: Hawkes 1946, 82 pl. XII); (2) model of Ballacagen Site A house (see Bersu 1946, 180 figs 3; 4); (3) reconstruction of Little Woodbury House I at Butser Experimental Farm (photographs: D. Freeman). Compare the over-rustic finish of House I's wartime reconstruction to its current Butser rendering – 'appearances' are telling!

Woodbury's House I saw the ultimate 'model-rendering': a full-size reconstruction in a Pinewood Studio backlot[87]. Both its Director and Art Director apparently travelled to the Isle of Man to confer with Bersu and, based on his recent experience there, he altered its design, changing the Woodbury house's 'high' thatched form to a low turfed profile[88].

To revise things in the light of experience is, of course, only proper. Due, however, to its load-bearing weight – and in the light of subsequent 'big house' findings (see below) – this turf-roof solution was rejected when the house was later (fully) reconstructed at Butser Experimental Farm. Supervised by David Freeman, a much lower, 8 m-high building was erected there[89]. At 42 degrees, its rafters are set on the inner post-circle's ring. Based on the experience of by then having built a number of roundhouses, their house required no central vertical support whatsoever, its roof being supported by the weave of hazel rod purlins and its tie-ring. The decision was, moreover, made that House I's four-square central posts must have related to an earlier structure, likely a raised granary[90]. Given that none of the other very large Late Bronze / Earlier Iron Age roundhouses that had been excavated after Little Woodbury had any evidence of a central support-post – let alone four[91] – this can

[87] Hawkes 1946.

[88] Hawkes 1946, 81. – One of Bersu's Manx roundhouses has now been reconstructed at the Dorset Ancient Technology Centre in Cranborne; making its turf-roof work has, however, apparently proven troublesome.

[89] Freeman pers comm. and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl_Dx00j31o (last access: 8.11.2021).

[90] Musson 1970, 271.

[91] Sharples 2010, 226–230 fig. 4.14.

only be correct, especially as Buster's construction has now successfully stood for 11 years with just alterations to its porch[92]. For Bersu, the house's reconstruction was essentially a paper-based exercise (see *fig. 7*), uninformed by a hands-on craft experience of building techniques and materials[93]. I must admit that I only find it entirely appropriate that rebuilding buildings, like revisiting site texts and evidence, involves reworkings: different approaches and other ways of seeing.

Aside from the animal skulls shown in Pits 52 and 113 (*fig. 2*)[94], a near-complete dog's skeleton appears to have been the site's only obvious candidates for 'placed' or special deposits from the site[95]. Bersu similarly only reported one human bone from the excavation, the mandible of an early middle-aged female found in a pit (No. 97). The paucity of the site's human remains is, in fact, surprizing given how much they now feature in the period's settlements and in the light of the intensity of Little Woodbury's excavation. With inhumation burial since firmly established as the period's main interment rite, it can only be suspected that either Little Woodbury's burials must have occurred in its unexcavated marginal portions or that other human remains had been unidentified amongst its missing animal bone (see *Note 7*).

In advance of a recent housing development, Wessex Archaeology have recently conducted excavations some 200 m north of the enclosure[96]. There they found traces of an 'open' Early Iron Age settlement. Amid its scattered pits were various posthole settings, including possible four-posters and an arcing arrangement that could relate to a roundhouse[97]. Aside from a contemporary ditch-line, there were also clusters of intercut pits comparable to Little Woodbury's working hollows. Most important was the recovery of nine crouched inhumations. The radiocarbon dates of eight indicate a range of 790–530 cal. BC, with just one later (520–380 cal. BC[98]). Noteworthy is that one of the graves had been disturbed by a later pit and that redeposited human remains occurred in adjacent pits[99]. The 'partial' or fragmented quality of this site's structural remains is entirely typical of the period's settlements. Indeed, in some cases no roundhouse-suggestive postholes settings whatsoever survive and, rather, the location of houses has to be determined by the arrangement of encircling pit clusters (i. e. quasi-circular 'voids'[100]). With this in mind, it is worth looking again at Little Woodbury's findings.

There were distinct clusters of postholes along the site's southern perimeter. Admitting that these 'mazes of post-sockets' could not then be explained, Bersu provided a detailed plan of one such grouping south of House II[101]. Repeated here *(fig. 12)*, of it he noted:

[92] See Harding 2009, 206 on the possibility that the four central posts related to builders' scaffolding and pages 53–57 (fig. 7) for his interpretation of House I's features (see also Harding et al. 1993, 56).

[93] The importance of Butser's roundhouse reconstructions since the 1970s cannot be over-estimated (e. g. Reynolds 1982; cf. Townsend 2007; see Sharples 2010, 174–176 on the experience of working at Butser). Unlike longhouse plans, there was no British vernacular circular timber-building tradition to draw upon; hence why their initial reconstructions were essentially paper-based and could be so 'extreme' (with African parallels generally only later explored; see e. g. Clarke 1972 and Lane 2015).

[94] Bersu 1940a, fig. 13.

[95] E. g. Cunliffe 1992; Hill 1995.

[96] Powell 2013; 2015.

[97] Powell 2013, 55–58 fig. 5.

[98] Powell 2013, 52–55.

[99] At Gussage All Saints, in addition to 52 Iron Age inhumations (38 infants), there were six deposits of 'loose' human bone (Keepax 1979).

[100] Evans et al. 2018, 152–154 fig. 4.24.

[101] Bersu 1940a, fig. 31.

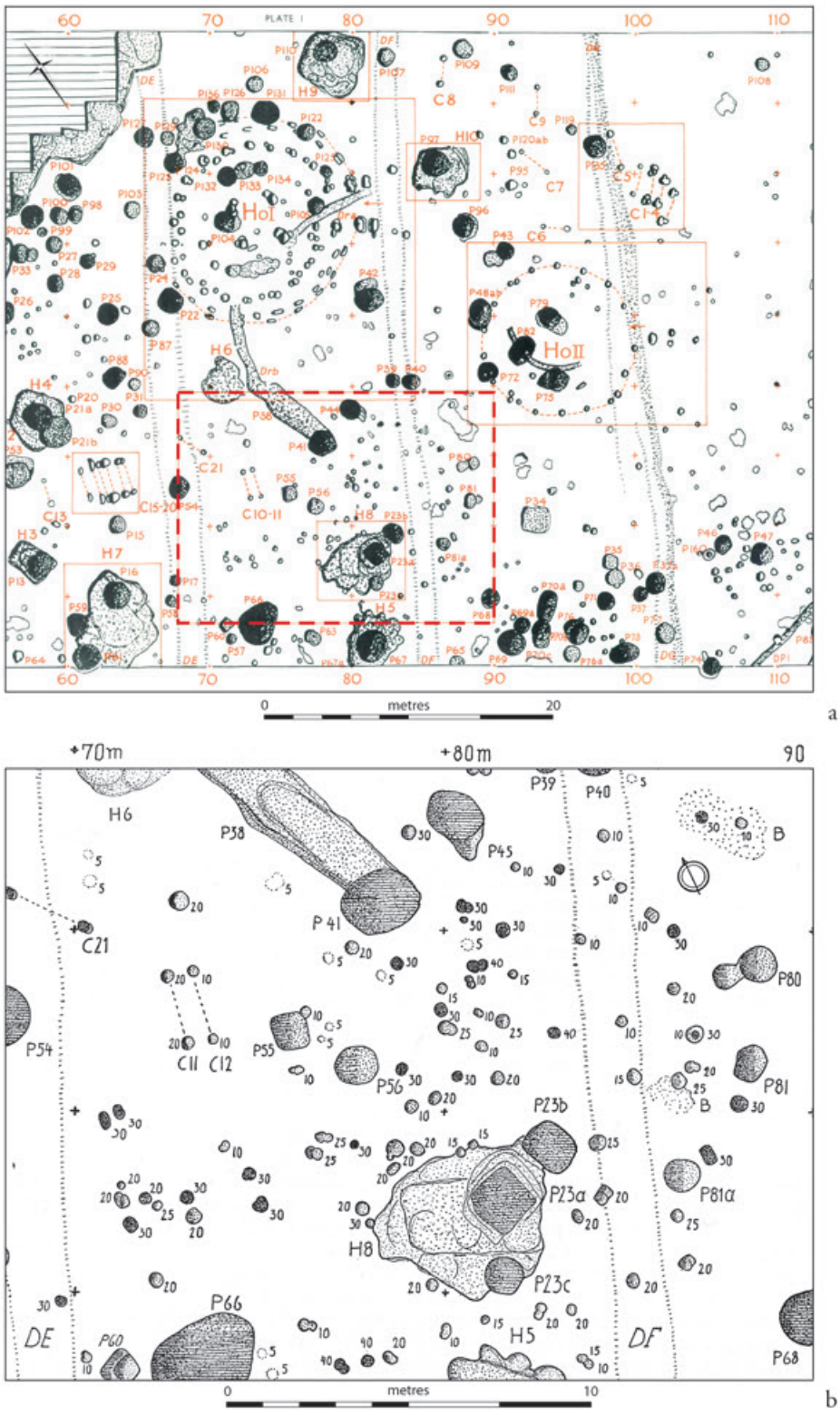


Fig. 12. Central portion of site base-plan (a; Bersu 1940a, pl. I), with detail (b) of 'maze of post-holes' (with posthole numbers indicating depth; Bersu 1940a, fig. 31).

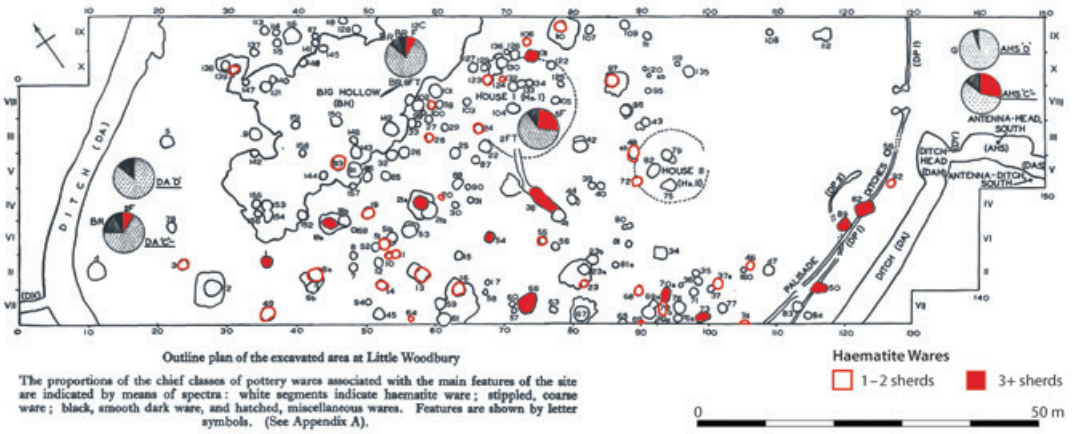


Fig. 13. Site base-plan, with proportion of Haematite Wares within main feature groups indicated as pie-charts and individual pit sherd-values plotted (after Brailsford / Jackson 1948 pl. I).

> "This sector was chosen because the posts … might, on the small scale of the complete plan, easily have led to the false conclusion that they belonged to another roundhouse. In fact the posts are so different from one another in depth and diameter that they cannot be connected to form an appropriate ground-plan"[102].

True, the postholes don't describe a complete perimeter, but the partial arc-setting of what is likely to have been at least one more roundhouse (augmented by still other lines) can certainly be distinguished amid the 'maze'[103]. By paying so little heed to what did not readily fit his house and pit 'types' – the non-readily explained 'chaos' – Bersu effectively truncated Little Woodbury's sequence. Clearly, he failed to distinguish the full complexity and extent of the 'Early' settlement preceding its ditched form.

Reporting the site's pottery, Brailsford noted that, based on the distribution of Haematite Wares, this 'Early' occupation focused in the area of House I and the 'Big Hollow'[104]. As shown in *figure 13*, with their listed values plotted, yes they were recovered in quantity at those points (74 and 41 sherds respectively), but they also occurred widely within the site's pits. There is, moreover, a suggestion of somewhat higher values throughout its southern sector; in other words, across the same swathe as the 'unattributed' posthole clusters[105].

[102] Bersu 1940a, 98.

[103] See *fig. 10* for Piggott's 1945 comments on such posthole settings.

[104] Brailsford 1948, 4–5.

[105] It has duly been recognized that Little Woodbury's palisaded form (Bersu 1940a, 46–48) likely preceded its ditched layout (Cunliffe 1974, 155–156). Unfortunately, due to the site's partial exposure, the extent of its palisade is unknown, and the settlement's unexcavated portions have not been subject to geophysical survey (nor has any of its material been radiocarbon dated). As shown on *figure 13*, pits with higher densities of Haematite Wares clearly cut and post-dated the palisade; this does not, though, preclude that in the site's unexcavated portions other 'Early' features may have predated its perimeter. Indeed, the arcing of the DP2 gully suggests that it might have respected a small roundhouse.

Appearing in Germania, Collis' review of Wainwright's Gussage all Saints provided a platform to discuss Little Woodbury and its phasing (Collis 1982, 627–628). Following Musson's 1970 suggestion that House I's four-central posts were independent of the great roundhouse, he went even further and argued that its associated drainage ditches – cutting across the building's wall-line (Collis 1982, fig. 1) – might represent the otherwise ploughed out remnants of a small later-phase enclosure like those at Gussage.

Bersu successfully delivered a 'picture' of Little Woodbury as a later prehistoric settlement, but it was essentially static. Aside from postulating that House II succeeded House I, little attention was given to the site's phasing[106]. This is surely attributable to the fact that its finds were only studied in detail after he had produced its main text. Still, the site's sequence does not seem to have been a particular concern. Only a few cuttings taken through its enclosure ditch and, then working at the British Museum, in 1947 Hawkes had Brailsford and the Piggotts return to the site to supervise the excavation of additional lengths of its circuit to obtain more pottery[107].

Of the settlement's chronology and character, Brailsford remarked:

> "It seems unlikely that the agricultural routine of Little Woodbury was ever disturbed by a major catastrophe, or that the settlement ever changed hands as the result of military conquest. The material from the site gives the impression of cultural continuity (…). Nevertheless, the unfinished ditch is witness that at some time the settlement was threatened by outside danger. The virtual absence of Haematite ware from layer 'D' of DA and AHS [the main enclosure and 'antennae head south' ditches] is consistent with the theory already advanced that the ditch was built at the time of Marnian invasions in the 3rd century B. C. It was these La Tène II invaders, no doubt, who introduced the Smooth Dark class of ware (…) to Wessex"[108].

By the absence of the earliest pottery types present at All Cannings Cross (e. g. decorated globular jars), he suggested that its occupation began in the 'mature stage of the Iron Age 'A'' (then accredited to c. 300 BC) and that – from the increased use of 'Smooth Dark Wares' – it lasted until sometime into the first century BC[109]. Some 250 years, now with the absolute dating of the Early Iron Age that much earlier, this estimate of the settlement's duration should probably be more than doubled. Based on either reckoning, this is far too long to be adequately covered in just a successive two-roundhouse occupation. If having direct continuity throughout, put simply, *too few building remains were realised to account for such an occupation span*.

Aftermaths

Acknowledging the effects of the site's only partial excavation and drawing upon what he held to be the low number of finds within its habitation deposits – plus its limited number of buildings – Bersu was emphatic that Little Woodbury represented a (rebuilt) single-dwelling farmstead and not a village, nor a market-type or a particularly high status settlement[110]. In his 1964 paper, 'Cultural Grouping within the British Pre-Roman Iron Age', Hodson proposed a basic chronology in the face of fragmented regional pottery series'[111]. Instead, he drew upon basic type-fossils: weaving combs, ring-headed pins and, most significantly, the roundhouse. Aside from Yorkshire's Arras and the Thames' Aylesford

[106] Twice in the text (1940a, 46; 48) Bersu asserts that the site's DP1 palisade-line was older than its DP2 version; whereas its plan-rendering clearly indicates the opposite (*fig. 13*; D. Harding pers comm.).

[107] Brailsford 1949, 156. – Writing to Bersu in 1942, Hawkes stressed that as soon as the war was finished Little Woodbury's excavation needed to be completed; not just to recover all of its pits and structures, but also to investigate its antenna ditches (see Evans 1998, 200 no. 22).

[108] Brailsford / Jackson 1948, 1.

[109] Brailsford / Jackson 1948, 1–2.

[110] Bersu 1940a, 98–100.

[111] Hodson 1946; and Hawkes' ABC System, wherein Woodbury also appeared; Hawkes 1959, 180 fig. 4.

cultural-group exceptions, stressing that Britain then fundamentally seemed apart from Continental developments (e. g. Hallstatt or Le Tène), Hodson entitled this insular / native Iron Age, *Woodbury Culture,* and, thereby, had the site epitomize the period's domestic settlement. In his schema the period was just sub-divided into 'Early and 'Late' *(fig. 14)*, with Little Woodbury's two houses shown in respect to these. Only put forward as a provisional first-attempt classification, this never really caught on and was superseded by Cunliffe's Early, Middle and Late chronology[112].

Little Woodbury nevertheless had an enormous influence on Britain's post-war Iron Age studies[113]. This was not just for comparable enclosed 'farmstead' sites, but also hillfort investigations[114]. Woodbury effectively provided the 'check-list' of what was expected of the period's settlements and, as early as 1947, Hawkes had declared it to be the 'Wessex type-site' of its kind. In the decades following the site's excavation, other comparably great roundhouses were quickly recovered; first by the Hawkes' at Longbridge Deverill Cow Down, Wiltshire in the later 1950s[115] and, then, in 1961 at Pimperene, Dorset[116]. At times termed 'Little Woodbury type / class' buildings[117], the site went onto to variously foster the 'Little Woodbury-type' economy and enclosures[118]. Its finds assemblages then provided much needed comparative base-line data, and it became something of an idealized settlement module / model. This was to the point that the 'slavish reiteration of the typicality of Little Woodbury' was critiqued[119], and was something that Wainwright's 1972 Gussage All Saints excavations (1979) was intended to readdress[120].

With large roundhouses also subsequently recovered in hillforts (e. g. Crickley Hill and Winklebury), and not just associated with single farmstead-type units, not only was Little Woodbury's 'model' questioned but, on other grounds, also the social status of its inhabitants. Whereas Bersu saw its resident farming family as being relatively lowly, based on Longbridge Deverill's findings Sonia Hawkes, for example, held "that the occupiers of our great roundhouses were men of substance, some them perhaps ranking as chieftains or even regional overlords"[121]. Cunliffe similarly elevated the rank of 'Woodbury-esque' settlements[122], with this mode of interpretation promoted by the high-quality metalworking debris – especially chariot fittings – at Gussage All Saints[123]. Reporting on the latter settlement, Wainwright drew upon earlier studies by Bowen[124] and others[125]. These linked such major roundhouse settlements with Celtic lords of legend, their halls and retinues, with this essentially being how – through the influence of Hawkes and Childe – Bersu had come to interpret his own Isle of Man roundhouse settlements[126].

[112] Cunliffe 1974.
[113] Evans 1989, 445.
[114] E. g. O'Neil 1942, 19.
[115] See Brown 2012.
[116] Harding / Blake 1963; see, also, Webley 2007 and Sharples 2010, 212–215.
[117] Musson 1970, 271; Harding et al. 1993, 54.
[118] Respectively, Piggott 1958 and Schadla-Hall 1977.
[119] Harding 1974, 21; see also 2009, 54–68.
[120] While Gussage's pits allowed for a reappraisal and modification of Bersu's analyses (Jefferies in Wainwright 1979, 8–15), that site's Early–Middle Iron Age building-related features proved poor and were not comparable to Little Woodbury's (see also Collis 1982).
[121] Hawkes 1994, 65.
[122] Cunliffe 1991, 227; see also Davis 2011.
[123] See Spratling 1979.
[124] E. g. Bowen 1969.
[125] Jones 1961; see Wainwright 1979, 192–194.
[126] Bersu 1946 and 1977; see Evans 1998. – As previously outlined (Evans 1998), Hawkes had sent Bersu a copy of the Mabinogion and, at some length, detailed the relevance of the Celtic tales to his Manx roundhouses. While this mode of interpretation did not significantly feature in their publication (Bersu 1946; 1977), as related in an Antiquaries Journal account (Vol. 24, 152; emphasis added), it apparently underpinned a 1944 lecture delivered on the Manx sites to the Society of Antiquaries: "Construction details revealed in

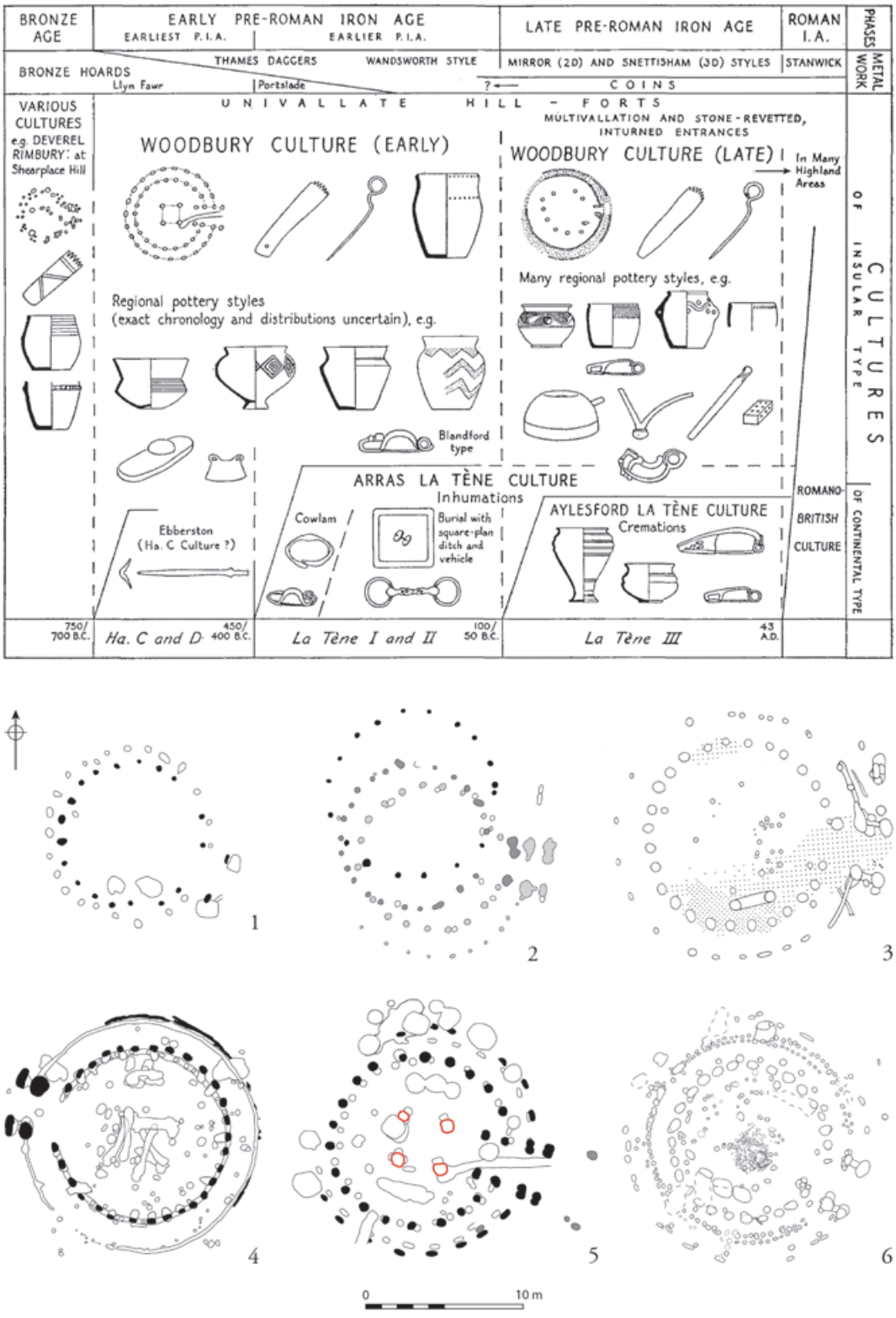


Fig. 14. Great Roundhouses: Hodson's Cultural Grouping schema, with Woodbury Culture types prominent (top; Hodson 1964 fig. 1); below, large Early Iron Age roundhouse plans: (1) Dunstan Park, Berks.; (2) Winklebury, Hamps.; (3) Longbridge Deverill Cow Down, Wilts.; (4) Flint Farm, Hamps.; (5) Little Woodbury, Wilts. (with its contentious four-set central posts shown in red); (6) Pimperene, Dorset (from Sharples 2010 figs 4.9; 4.14).

Bersu may not have fully detailed Little Woodbury's phasing, nor elucidated the specific 'antennae-ed' form of its enclosure, he did, though, duly emphasize the dynamics of the period's agricultural production[127]. Approaching fieldwork results in a highly systematic manner – if, at times, somewhat formulaically – he firmly established the period's main structural components: roundhouses + four-posters + storage pits. This amounted to *a new way of seeing* (the past) within a British context, one arising from contemporary German excavation practices and scholarship. Not only did he successfully articulate the settlement as "a social and economic organism"[128], but Little Woodbury's 'big plan-view' provided an analytical framework enabling the first feature-type distribution plots of any site in the country.

When compared to what had went before in Britain, what Bersu achieved at Little Woodbury amounted to nothing less than a sea-change as to how Iron Age settlement was envisaged. Yet, in relationship to 'evidential reasoning'[129], yes, the site marked a singular watershed, but there still remains the matter of its 'absurd' roof designs. Largely due to his own Ballacagan-inspired reduced-pitch modifications, these received little notice; but, then, neither was its later turf-roof solution seriously accredited (there being, after all, no evidence that House I's roof was ground-anchored). Instead, over the ensuring decades, the key factor was the recovery of other large Early Iron Age roundhouse plans. Lacking any central roof-support, it is these – and Butser's hands-on craft-building knowledge (vs. paper-based renderings) – that have directly informed Little Woodbury's reconstructions.

What this signifies is the degree to which archaeological knowledge is pattern-based and that *pattern* is its abiding epistemology. Due to limited survival and the past's 'fragmentation', one-off findings are often ambiguous, and the subject's collective acknowledgement/endorsement is largely determined by repetitive recovery. Of course, once having established type-configurations, the question thereafter becomes how much variability they will withstand?

In the case of Little Woodbury, with no firm building forms to draw upon, based upon inductive reasoning Bersu fashioned its main building from a variety interpretative sources, including historical / ethnographic parallels and various 'house rules'. Through time and accrued site-derived archaeological context (i. e. 'pattern'), while many of Bersu's interpretations have 'stood the test', others have been duly jettisoned[130]. Rarely definitive, site-data involves successive reworkings and complex trajectories – Oelmann's "Haus und Hof" lying behind Köln-Lindenthal, which in turn backgrounded Little Woodbury, that then influenced so much of Britain's later prehistory (even its henges) – and is variously underpinned by alliance networks and dispute. When engaging with fieldwork's historiographies, in an effort to truly understand sites it is essential that such 'deep' linkages are traced and fully appreciated.

> the excavation of these houses demand a complete revision of the hitherto accepted categories of 'crannogs', 'raths', and 'duns' … Not least, we now have factual evidence of the 'palaces' which figure prominently in the poetry of the Celtic Golden Age … As to social conditions, it may be concluded that the local 'chieftains' lived in comfortable round manor-houses, where the hearth-group would consist of themselves, their family and servants."

[127] Sharples 2011, 671.

[128] Bersu 1940a, 30.

[129] Chapman / Wylie 2016.

[130] While lacking a comparable episode of 'eureka' or 'blinkers-off' change as Bersu delivered for Iron Age roundhouses, the history of causewayed enclosure interpretation charts a similar trajectory, with broad variable – often external – sources eventually superseded by accrued excavation-result contexts (Evans 1988).

Acknowledgements

This effort has only benefited from information and critique variously provided by many: Richard Bradley, Marcus Brittain, Bob Chapman, John Collis, Harry Fokkens, Dennis Harding, Gavin Lucas, Harold Mytum, and Niall Sharples. I am particularly grateful to David Freeman for sharing the insights of his Butser roundhouse-building experience, and that both Bob and Niall kindly allowed me to utilize figures from their respective volumes. Otherwise, Julia Farley (British Museum), Beth Hodgett (Oxford's Crawford material), Julie Parry (Prehistoric Society Archivist, University of Bradford) and, at RGK, Susanne Grunwald, Sandra Schröer, and David Wigg-Wolf, helped steer my way to archival sources, as did also Margarita Díaz-Andreu.

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Seeing differently: Rereading Little Woodbury

Zusammenfassung · Summary · Résumé

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG · Die außergewöhnlichen, kriegsbedingten Umstände der Ausgrabungen in Little Woodbury, vor allem die soziale Zusammensetzung der Belegschaft und Bersus Status als „Außenseiter", werden hier nur kurz gestreift, da sie sowohl bei Evans (1989) als auch in diesem Sammelband von Harold Mytum ausführlicher behandelt werden. Stattdessen wird hier das Augenmerk auf die technischen Grabungsmethoden sowie auf die Interpretation der Fundstelle gerichtet. Vor dem Hintergrund einer sehr geringen Anzahl von überzeugend ausgegrabenen prähistorischen Siedlungen im damaligen Großbritannien war der archäologische Ansatz klar plan- und komponentenbezogen und stützte sich stark auf die von Franz Oelmann formulierten baulichen „Gesetzgebungen" von Haus und Hof. Zusätzlich wurde eine Vielfalt an ethnografischen und historischen Quellen zurate gezogen. Während das Ausmaß von Bersus Verdienst um Little Woodbury sowie der bahnbrechende Charakter seiner Feldforschungen keinesfalls geschmälert werden sollen, werden einige seiner Argumentationen hinterfragt und gewisse Aspekte seiner Interpretation kritisch betrachtet. Dazu gehören die absurden Dimensionen einiger seiner großen Rundhausrekonstruktionen, das Außerachtlassen von gewissen Faktoren der Siedlungsstruktur sowie die Nichterkennung der Komplexität der Siedlungsabfolge.

(S. H. / I. A.)

SUMMARY · Briefly rehearsed here, with issues relating to Little Woodbury's extraordinary wartime circumstances – particularly its societal orchestration and Gerhard Bersu's 'outsider' status – previously addressed (Evans 1989) and also further outlined in this volume by Harold Mytum, this contribution rather focuses upon its methodological technique and interpretation. Practicing a plan-based and distinctly component-type archaeology, with so few convincing prehistoric settlements then excavated within Britain, underpinned by Oelmann's evolutionary *Haus und Hof* building 'laws' (1927), a wide range of ethnographic and historical sources were drawn upon. While fully acknowledging just what Bersu achieved there and how groundbreaking was the fieldwork, the paper raises questions of its evidential reasoning and involves critique: the absurdity of some of its great roundhouse reconstructions, the settlement-matrix factors that were ignored and the failure to appreciate the full complexity of the site's sequence.

RÉSUMÉ · Reprise ici brièvement, avec des questions concernant les circonstances exceptionnelles à Little Woodbury durant la guerre – particulièrement son organisation sociétale et le statut d'étranger de Bersu – abordées précédemment (Evans 1989) et développées plus loin dans ce volume par Harold Mytum, cette contribution se concentre plutôt sur sa technique méthodologique et son interprétation. En effet, un large éventail de sources ethnographiques et historiques furent exploitées dans la conduite d'une archéologie basée sur des plans et utilisant des unités (« components »), malgré le faible nombre d'habitats préhistoriques convaincants fouillés en Grande-Bretagne, et étayée par les « lois » de construction évolutives d'Oelmann *(Haus und Hof im Altertum)*. Tout en reconnaissant pleinement le travail révolutionnaire de Bersu réalisé ici, cet article questionne son argumentation et émet des critiques : l'absurdité de certaines reconstitutions des maisons circulaires, l'ignorance des facteurs de la matrice territoriale et le manque d'appréciation de toute la complexité de la séquence du site. (Y. G.)

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