

WILDE STREET, MILDENHALL

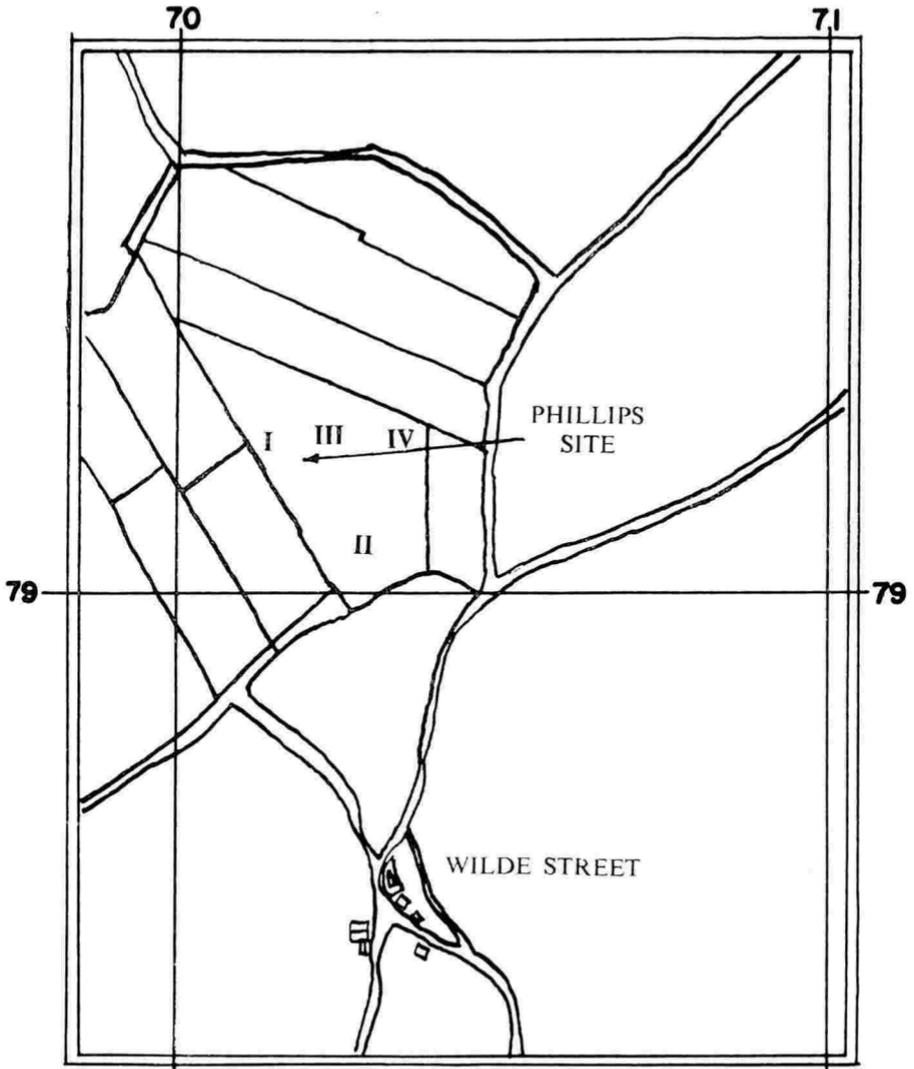


FIG. 2.—Phillips Farm sites.

# A SERIES OF LATE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE SITES, WILDE STREET, MILDENHALL

By COLONEL THOMAS C. KELLY, U.S.A.F.

These sites were discovered about 1963 by Thomas Flack of Wilde Street, north of Mildenhall, while looking for another Late Palaeolithic site for additional information on the blade tool industry reported at the King Site. Actually, five sites were discovered on Mr. Arnold Phillips' farm (Fig. 2). The first one, referred to simply as 'Phillips', was the most interesting as far as the Bronze Age occupation is concerned because of the finding of a bronze knife in close association with potsherds, flints and bone needles. The late Palaeolithic occupation that was originally sought for was found stratified under Phillips II and will be reported separately. The upper Phillips II industry was identical with those described in this paper; Phillips 11 20X, is an extension of Phillips II, but with no blade tool industry below it. Phillips III and IV, are other sites of the same late Middle Bronze Age period, but as they failed to yield either bronze or bone artefacts or any flint or pottery types significantly different from the original Phillips site, they are included only as a short addendum to this report, but flint, pottery, and bones are listed in the tables.

## PHILLIPS SITE

The original Phillips Site (TL/702792) was an occupation site consisting primarily of a circular depression, only ten feet in maximum diameter, which had been found in an old lake. Half of this circular area overlay peat representing an earlier edge of the old lake (Stratum 2). A rough circle only five feet in diameter and 1.5 feet in depth contained most of the artefacts and charcoal of the occupational debris, with the outer five feet representing the scatter one would expect around a camp site (Fig. 3).

This elementary shelter appears to have required only a slight amount of scooping out of a natural sand hollow to form a bowl-shaped pit with a portion of the south rim removed adjacent to the then existing lake (C on the plan is 1.8 feet lower than D in the yellow sand stratum that was the surface when the site was occupied). A six to nine inch occupation stratum was then built up by fires, discarded animal bones and humus material. Bones were well preserved in this site by the sudden occurrence of another wet

period which covered the site with peat and peaty sand (the black peaty sand stratum just under the plough soil). The rising water percolated upward through the iron-containing sands and by evaporation formed a layer of iron pan two to four inches thick over part of the circular area and the immediate occupation debris a few feet north of the site. The site was thus well sealed and is apparently 'pure'. Scattered flint debris, consisting mainly of percussion-flaked circular scrapers, was actually found imbedded in the bottom of this iron pan at the discovery point. In that portion of the circular depression that had been rapidly covered by peat and silt, all bone was well preserved and in addition to numerous fragments of domestic animals, several worked bone artefacts were discovered. A total of 88 scrapers were found in this small site, 59 from within the five foot inner pit. The major importance of the site, however, lies in the fact that a bronze knife (Fig. 5) was found closely associated with potsherds, and provides another rare correlation between a bronze and a pottery sequence of the later Middle Bronze Age.

Bone, with the exception of only two specimens of red deer, were all of mature domestic animals, indicating either a one-time occupation of the site or a recurring seasonal occupation. Cattle represent 74% of the identifiable bone.

All material from this site is deposited in the Ipswich Museum (Registration number: 964.14).

#### STRATIGRAPHY

The stratigraphy (Fig. 3, Sections A-B, C-D) begins at the bottom with a coarse, yellow homogeneous sand that has been interpreted by Dr. I. W. Cornwall, London University, as water-borne, after personal inspection of the site. Stratum 2 is a peat layer representing a higher level shore line of the old lake that this site is adjacent to. Strata 3 and 4 are basically the same yellow sand, water-leached white in Stratum 3 and discoloured by the overlying dark occupation strata in Stratum 4.

There is some indication that Stratum 4 has been slightly scooped out by the site's occupants as evidenced by its circular plan. Stratum 5 is a dense black occupation stratum, the colour derived primarily from quantities of charcoal, ash, burnt bones and humus material. The occupation stratum is centrally overlain by a layer of black peaty sand, Stratum 6, by a thin layer of bright red iron pan at its uphill (northern) or D end, and by a more recent layer of peat representing a higher level of the pond from a period when the site must have been covered with water, Stratum 9. Stratum 8 is the result of ploughing and recent humus. The rapid covering of the site by peat is probably the reason for the preserva-

PLAN  
SCALE: 4" = 5'

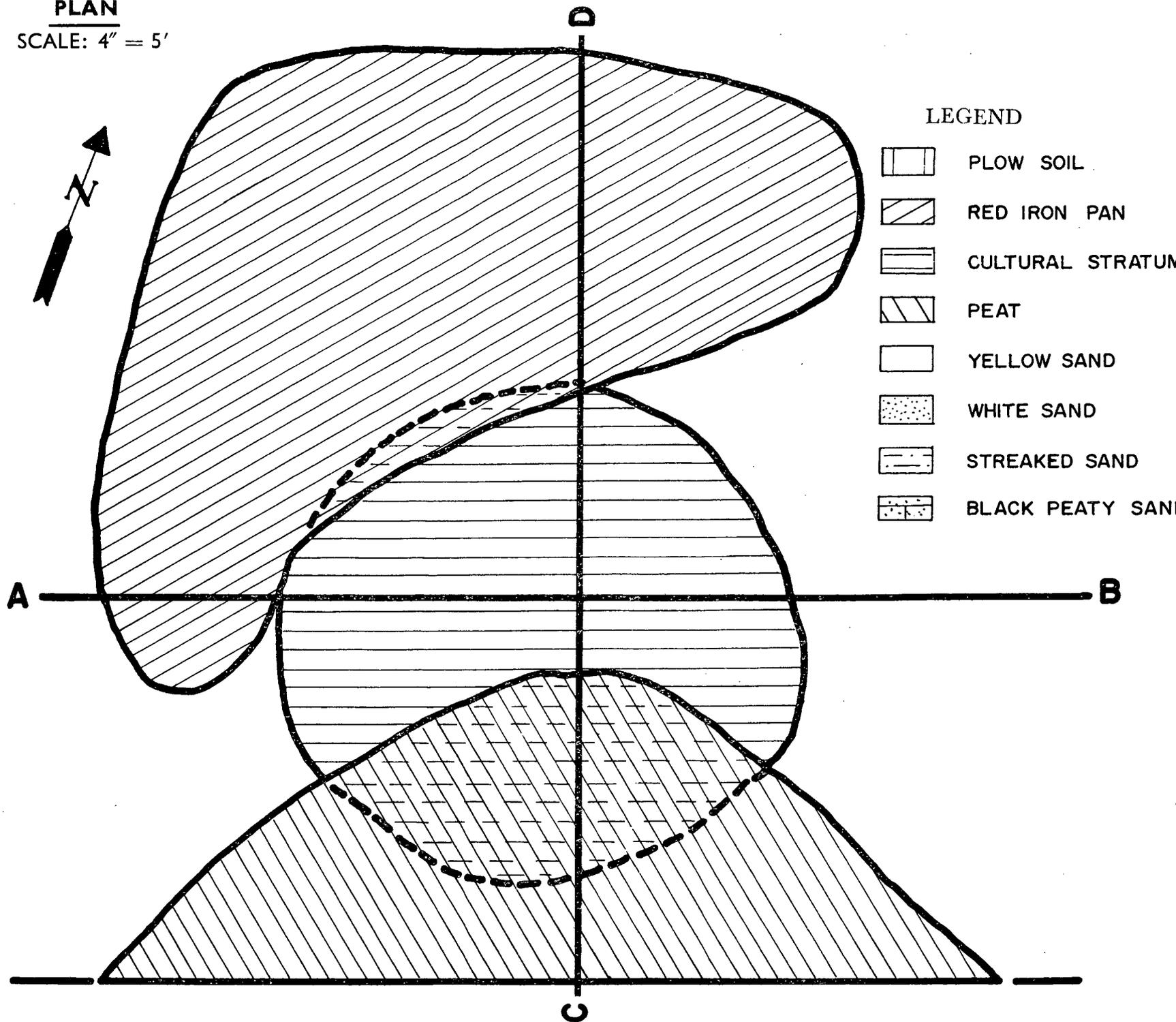
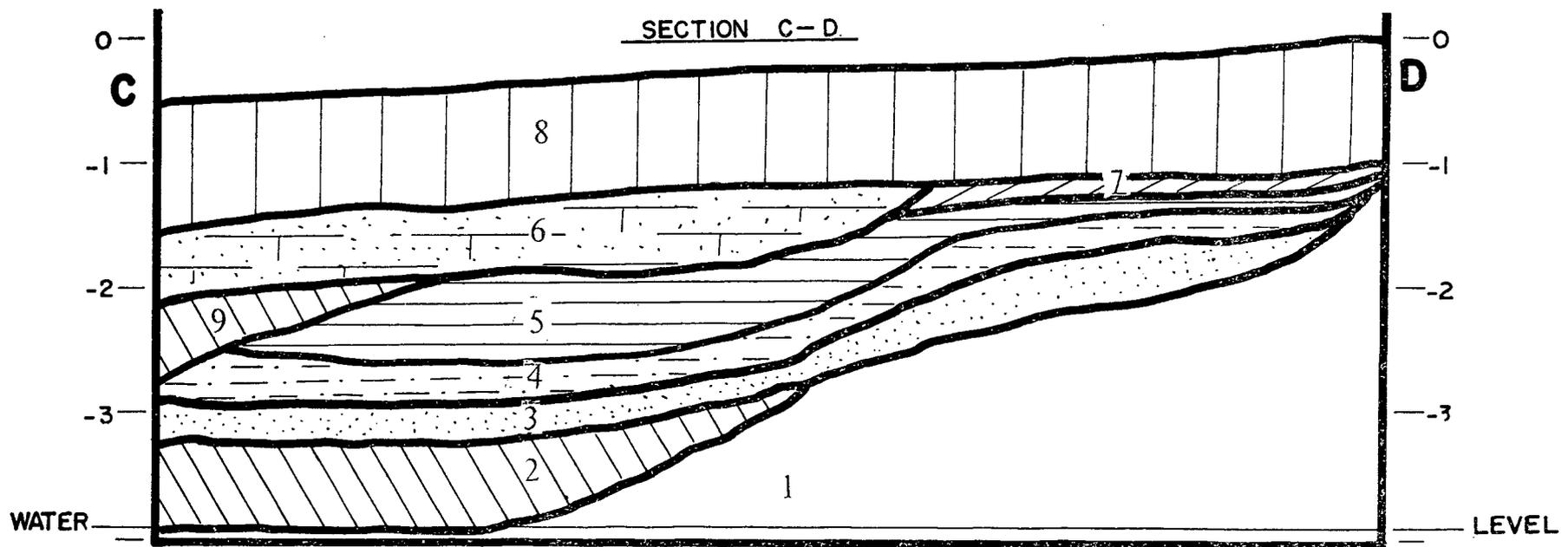
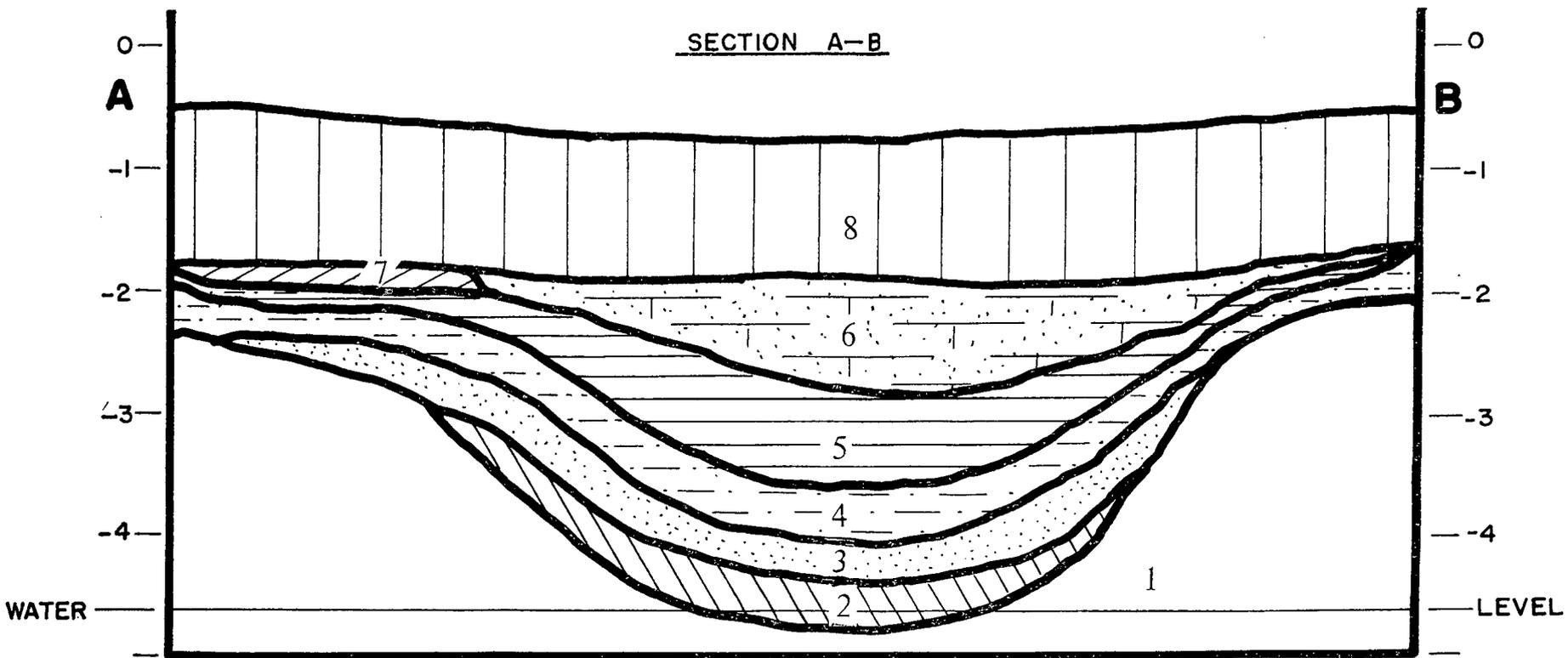


FIG. 3.—Phillips Site, plan.



Phillips Site, sections.

tion of bone in the site. It would also indicate a termination date for the site corresponding to a sudden change in water level.

The iron pan (A-D in Fig. 3) was formed by the upward movement of water, leaching iron from the heavily iron-containing yellow sand and depositing it by evaporation near its highest rise, (Dr. Cornwall). Scattered flints were sealed in the bottom of this iron pan, providing an area that no later artefacts could intrude through. As these flints were exactly the same as those found in the dense concentration of the central circular site, the chances are very good that this is a 'pure' site representing a short or one-time occupation. Other evidence supporting a one-time occupation is the scarcity of potsherds and the low proportion of immature domestic animal bones (4.5%).

Professor Grahame Clark reported on similar sites in the Mildenhall Fen, Field 1812.<sup>1</sup> Almost complete correlation exists between the pottery types of the two sites, the notable exception being the cord-impressed pottery described by Clark and labelled 'Mildenhall Ware'. The bone needles are identical types in both sites as are the circular scrapers (Plate VI a). Clark describes two unknown bone implement types and again these are practically the same as two specimens from the Phillips Site. No arrowheads nor any bifacially worked flints were found in any of the Phillips sites. A flaking tool or fabricator of flint found in Phillips is not reported by Clark.

A carbon sample was obtained, adjacent to the bronze knife, and has been dated by the Exploration Department and Geochemical Laboratory, Humble Oil and Refining Company, Houston, Texas:

Run. no. 0-2134 PHILLIPS SITE, PHILLIP'S FARM,  $4,250 \pm 125$  B.P.

Charcoal from the middle of a 6-inch cultural level in close proximity to the ground water table on the Phillips' Farm.

#### ARTEFACT DESCRIPTION

##### *Flint*

The flint is predominantly black Brandon flint with a few pieces of honey-coloured flint. It is only very slightly patinated at the most and its source must have been pebbles, judging by the cortex found on almost every piece, including the crude cores (Plate VI b).

Manufacturing technique seems to have been exclusively hammerstone percussion with heavy flakes 'bashed' off with more

<sup>1</sup> J. G. D. Clark, *Antiquaries Journal*, xvi (1936).

force than skill. Large irregular striking platforms and bulbs of percussion are usual. Only a few specimens showed evidence of pressure-finishing of edges.

Fifty-nine circular scrapers were found within a five-foot circle of the bronze knife and are analysed according to Boehmers. Forty-seven, or 80%, were flaked on the edge opposite the bulb of percussion. Forty-five, or 75%, had at least traces of the pebble cortex. Thirty-three, or 58% fall in the 65° to 75° flaking angle, with the average scraping angle being 67°. Note that Phillips III and IV scrapers averaged 66° and 64°. A total of 88 of these circular scrapers were found on the site, an extraordinary number considering that the total size of the site was only 100 square feet.

*Flint Table*

	<i>Phillips</i>	<i>Phillips II 20X</i>	<i>Phillips III</i>	<i>Phillips IV</i>
Circular Scrapers	88	25	13	15
Blades		27		
Fine Blade Cores		2	1	
Crude Cores	2	18	16	
Hammerstones	1	7	3	2
Fabricator	1			
Worked Flakes		7	10	8
Flakes	200+	114	145	109
Slug Knife		1		
Microliths	2			
Average flaking of all circular scrapers	67°		66°	64°

The complete absence of biface tools would indicate that metal knives were the primary cutting tools, although some few flakes and three thin unifacially worked fragments could have been used for cutting. A single fabricator 65 mm. long, made from a pebble by percussion flaking, was worn smooth on its working end. It could easily have provided the edge retouch for the few scrapers and flakes so worked. The complete dominance of the flint industry by scrapers, coupled with bone awls or pins, would indicate the processing of hides for clothing or shelter as the primary occupation of the people of this site. Three hammerstones were the only other utilized flint tools found. Six crude cores and just over 200 flint fragments, all by-products of scraper making, complete the inventory.

### *Bone*

Six bone awls or pins and a bone in process of being cut in half longitudinally to make awls are pictured in Plate VI *a*. All were manufactured by splitting a bone and cutting or grinding to a point. Plate VI *a* 7 is practically identical with those figured by Clark, (Plate VIII, 2, 3, 4).

The unusual piece of long bone (Plate VI *a* 9) has been split or cut at an angle and then ground flat. As the flat end is broken, one can only guess that it was pointed for some purpose. It would seem to be the finished product pictured by Clark (Plate VIII, 1).

Another item of bone quite similar to one of Clark's (p.48, Fig. 12, 1) is shown in Plate VI *a* 1, where its close physical association with the bronze knife would make one think it was being shaped as a new handle for the knife with its broken rivet hold. The internal cavity of this artefact is just the right depth to take the knife's tang, and the crudely marked out square with a hole partially drilled into it is also just about right for the width of the knife tang. Professor Clark's artefact with its drilled holes at roughly the same point could possibly have also been a knife handle.

### *Wood*

Only one piece of wood was preserved in the site, a 30 x 45 mm. piece of bog oak 5 mm. thick (Plate VI *a* 2). This odd bit had been cut and shaped with a tool and has a series of fine parallel scratches reminiscent of a tally board.

### *Pottery*

Pottery was poor, imperfectly fired, buff coloured to gray, with the inside of the sherds black. Tempering was grit and burnt flint and most sherds were in a plastic condition when found, but dried out well enough with careful handling (Fig. 4).

It followed the general Deverel-Rimbury tradition of Southern England as described by Fox.<sup>2</sup> Both rim sherds and decorated sherds were scarce with the bulk of the pottery being rough and undecorated; decorated sherds are mostly fingernail incised on rim or cordon. All pottery from all five Phillips sites has been classified and compared with Clark's Mildenhall Fen groups. It is to be noted that Clark's Group II cord-impressed is not found in the Phillips sites and that one chevron-incised sherd was found in Phillips IV. Otherwise, Phillips and Mildenhall Fen are prac-

<sup>2</sup> C. Fox, *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region*, pp. 39-40.

tically identical. Scarcity of pottery indicates a probable short or nomadic occupation of all Phillips sites.

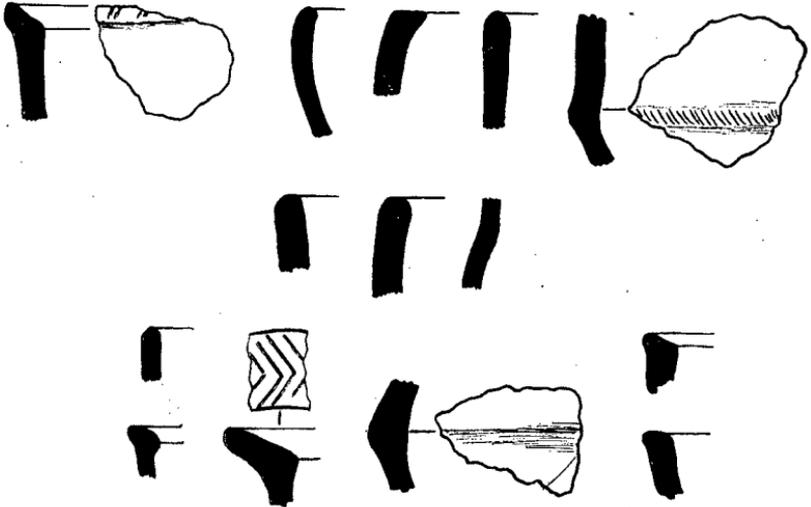


FIG. 4.—Late Middle Bronze Age sherds ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ).

### *Bronze*

The bronze knife, found almost in the centre of the circular depression (Fig. 5) is in an excellent state of preservation, with

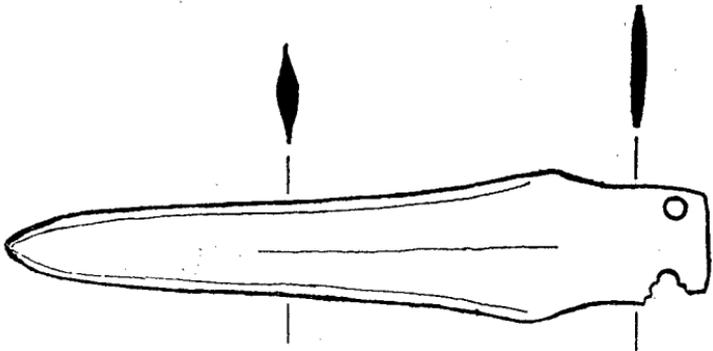


FIG. 5.—Bronze knife ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ).

the blade still sharp and serviceable. It is 135 mm. long, 30 mm. wide at the widest point just below the tang and had two rivet holes 15 mm. apart at right angles to the long axis of the blade. One hole

has been broken out, possibly accounting for its loss on the site. The bone specimen (Plate VI a 1) was probably the owner's unfinished attempt to rehaft it under camp conditions. The knife was cast with a median ridge on both sides and the edges were hollow ground. The tang had been hammered flat on both edges while the butt end of the tang was left almost sharp.

(*Note by Dr. J. M. Coles*: In the absence of a satisfactory radio-carbon date, it is necessary to rely upon the artefact analysis for dating the site. The pottery has hitherto been described as of the late Bronze Age, although recent work on metal industries in southern England has shown that much of the Deverel-Rimbury tradition lies in the Middle Bronze Age, in the late second millennium B.C.

The dagger, the first to be associated with this pottery in the area, is just what one might expect to find, because it seems to demonstrate elements of both Middle and Late Bronze Age forms. On the one hand, its trapeze-shaped tang, although elongated, and its two rivet-holes seem to show considerable typological connection with some daggers and dirks dated to the early Middle Bronze Age, such as that from Ely.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, its slender blade and lengthened tang suggest some relationship with Late Bronze Age tanged daggers, like the one in the Reach Fen hoard,<sup>4</sup> although in this case the two rivets were set in a longitudinal line).

#### PHILLIPS SITE (BRONZE AGE) FAUNAL REMAINS

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Of the 433 bones and teeth from the Phillips Site, 159 (38.8%) were identifiable. The animals represented are:

Cattle	74.3%	(130 specimens)
Horse	11.2%	( 18 specimens)
Sheep or Goat	10.1%	( 23 specimens)
Pig	4.4%	( 10 specimens)
Red Deer		( 2 specimens)

The most obvious feature seen in these figures is the very high proportion of bovid remains. Another important and striking point about this collection is the large number of teeth in relation to other remains:

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, xxviii (1962), 83, Fig. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Inventaria Archaeologica*, G.B. 17,2.

Cattle:	9 mandibles, 53 single teeth and 15 fragments of teeth (plus 14 mandibles without teeth)
Horse:	18 single teeth
Sheep or Goat:	2 mandibles and 11 single teeth.
Pig:	2 mandibles and 1 single tooth.

Single teeth and mandibles make up 71.7% of the identifiable part of the collection. Of the other bones, 37% are complete, none of them long bones.

TABLE I. SKELETAL REMAINS (excluding mandibles and teeth):

	<i>Bovid</i>	<i>Sheep/goat</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Red Deer</i>
Humerus	1		2†		
Radius	3	1			
Ulna	4		1		
Femur	1				
Tibia	6	1			
Scapula	2	2	1		1
Pelvis	1				
Metacarpal	1*	1			
Metatarsal	3*	1			1
Metapodial	2	1			1
Astragalus	1*	1*			
Prox. Phalanx	3*	1*			
Med. Phalanx	6*†				
Cuboid Navicula	1*				
Calcaneum		1			
Maxilla	2				

† immature specimen. \* complete specimen.

These bones tell little more than the figures for the over-all percentage of the animals represented quoted above. They do show, however, a very low proportion of immature animals—only four bones. This is reflected in the number of immature mandibles—four—all of them bovid (this does not include 16 single deciduous teeth).

The relative proportion of animals present are:

	(a) <i>Mandibles and teeth only</i>	(b) <i>All bones except mandibles and teeth</i>
Bovid	62.3%	78.2%
Sheep or Goat	13.0%	13.0%
Horse	21.2%	—
Pig	3.5%	8.7%

Only 4.4% of the collection is definitely immature. If the settlement was an all-the-year-round one, one might expect a high proportion of young males killed while they were still young. This lack of immature beasts could possibly be explained if it were a site occupied seasonally.

Twelve mandibles could be aged:

Cattle:	3 mandibles are greater than 3 years old
	2 mandibles are greater than $2\frac{1}{2}$ years old
	2 mandibles are about $1\frac{1}{2}$ years old
	1 mandible is less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ years old
	1 mandible is about 6 months old
Sheep or Goat:	2 mandibles are greater than 2 years old
Pig:	1 mandible is greater than $1\frac{1}{2}$ years old
	1 mandible is greater than 13 months.

Sheep and cattle bone measurements from this site compared with measurements of corresponding bones from the Iron Age site at Barley show a constant difference, those from Phillips Site being longer and narrower than those from Barley. Unfortunately only a few bones were measurable (average measurements are given):

TABLE II. (LENGTH AND BREADTH):

	<i>Phillips Site</i>	<i>Barley</i>
Sheep astragalus	28 mm x 17 mm (1 specimen)	27 mm x 19 mm (3 specimens)
Sheep prox. phalanx	35 mm x 11 mm (1 specimen)	32 mm x $12\frac{1}{2}$ mm (6 specimens)
Bovid prox. phalanx	61 mm x 27 mm (3 specimens)	$56\frac{1}{8}$ mm x 32 mm (6 specimens)
Bovid medial phalanx	38 mm x 25 mm (5 specimens)	$35\frac{1}{2}$ mm x $26\frac{1}{2}$ mm (6 specimens)

#### PHILLIPS II 20X

This was a 30 ft. x 20 ft. excavation, 100 yards south of the original Phillips Site. Unfortunately, the Bronze Age occupation stratum was too thinly covered by top soil and was consequently mixed up by wartime ploughing. The earlier Late Palaeolithic industry, as evidenced by blades, finely knapped blade cores, and microliths, was lightly represented in the north end of the site as

was one of the distinctive black crescent-shaped features, well below the plough zone in yellow sand, that have been found everywhere that the Palaeolithic industry has been discovered in the King Site and in Phillips II.

The Bronze Age flints, potsherds, and bone are therefore merely listed in the pottery, flint and bone tables of this report.

The only notable artefact different from the other Phillips Sites was a finely made 'slug knife' of flint, found in the crescent feature, and its significance is unknown. A carbon sample from this feature may provide an answer when and if processed.

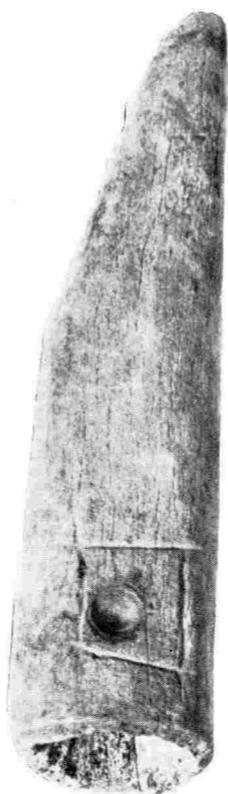
### PHILLIPS III

A 40 ft. × 40 ft. excavation only 50 yards east of the original Phillips Site revealed another camp site with an identical pottery and flint industry. Again, it was on the edge of an old pond or lake and its southern limit disappears in the peat. Two distinct camp-fire areas containing quantities of rock, charcoal and bone are the only features of this site. The stone was carried from elsewhere as none is found naturally in the site. The camp was in a sand gully and was covered by a rising water level soon after its abandonment, as indicated by an overlying layer of peat and peaty sand with quantities of bone preserved. The preponderance of scrapers in the flint industry is again noted (table of flint artefacts, p. 50), but bone artefacts (other than cut or butchered pieces) are missing. Lack of any flint weapons plus the domestic animal bone inventory would indicate a peaceful, pastoral family group. The very scarcity of potsherds in all Phillips Sites would also indicate a short occupation of a nomadic group.

### PHILLIPS IV

This site was a 12 ft. circular site, 110 yards south-east of Phillips III on the north edge of another pond and is so nearly identical to the original Phillips Site in plan and section as not to warrant description. No bronze or bone implements were found nor were there any significant variations in flint or pottery. Pottery, flint and bone are listed in tables.

All the material from Phillips II 20X, III and IV is deposited in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge.



(a)

1



2 (wood)



3



(b)

1



2



Beck Row, (a) wood and bone imp

LATE VI



ents; (b) flints.

4

5