



The Archaeological Journal

Book Reviews



AN IRON AGE ENCLOSURE AND ROMANO-BRITISH FEATURES AT HIGH POST, NEAR SALISBURY. By Andrew B. Powell. Pp. viii and 112, Illus 60. Wessex Archaeology, 2012. Price: £5.95. ISBN: 978 1 874350 57 6.

This book presents the results of Wessex Archaeology's 2008–2009 excavation of the Iron Age and late Romano-British site at High Post. It is laid out in a relatively standard format with features discussed by period, material specific chapters, a useful section on dating, and a final concluding chapter which places the site in its wider context. Efforts have, however, been made throughout to integrate the different strands of evidence within the individual sections.

The Iron Age features comprise a large boundary ditch with possible bank, three round houses with associated post-holes, with one possibly predating the boundary ditch, as well as 130 pits concentrated in the north-east of the settlement and a large spread of articulated animal bone. The extent of the enclosure is not known but it may range from 1.2 ha up to *c.* 4.7 ha and it appears to have been constructed and abandoned during the Middle Iron Age.

The Iron Age pits did contain a number of 'unusual' deposits similar to those seen on Danebury and other sites; however, the focus of much of the report is the impressive articulated animal bone layer. This was recovered from inside the enclosure, close to the boundary ditch, and it may have originally been *c.* 15 m long and up to 2.3 m wide. Recognizing the unhelpful nature of interpretive descriptions such as 'special deposits', the animal remains are discussed as Associated Bone Groups (ABGs; p. 70). The spread consists of 155 ABGs, representing a minimum of 25 cattle, 5 sheep, a pig and a horse, producing an estimated 7,450 kg of meat. Radiocarbon dates and the position of the deposits suggest the remains are either contemporary or predate the creation of the boundary ditch, with the resulting bank possibly being constructed over the bone layer (p. 91). Whilst considering its multifaceted nature, it is concluded the deposit may represent the aftermath of a large communal feast, held to motivate or celebrate the construction of the boundary ditch.

At present there are few comparable deposits in terms of morphology and scale and the bone layer represents one of the largest single collections of ABGs known. It is therefore a shame that the detailed zooarchaeological analysis of these remains is only summarized (Chapter 6). A catalogue of each individual ABG and the unusual pit deposits would be of great value to future researchers.

The final version of this review will appear in *The Archaeological Journal* 169 for 2012.

The late Romano-British features included a corn drying / malting oven and a possible oval shrine with associated pits containing deposits of metal artefacts including a Walbrook-type steelyard. Human remains were recovered from the oven and a partially disarticulated burial was identified on top of the Iron Age bone layer. Radiocarbon dating confirmed its Roman date, with the placement discussed as mnemonic or coincidence (p. 26).

Lack of detailed catalogues and the odd typographical error aside, this is an excellent book and considering the quality colour illustrations throughout, it is exceptional value. This should result in the site getting the widespread dissemination it deserves.

JAMES MORRIS