

Alistair Marshall, *The Development of an Iron Age and Roman Settlement Complex at The Park and Bowsings, near Guiting Power, Gloucestershire: Farmstead and Stronghold*. (Archaeopress, 2020) 204pp, numerous b/w illustrations. Cardcovers, £32.00 [ISBN 9781789693638]

There are many small non-hillfort enclosures dated to the Iron Age recorded throughout the North Cotswolds, most being rectilinear, although there are a few curvilinear examples. Some have been observed as cropmarks and their perimeter ditches visible, but probably also defined by banks, they appear both singly and in groups especially on the dip slope. In the late 1990s very few of these enclosures had been dated securely, whether by surface finds or excavation, and their interpretation rested largely on these morphological characteristics. However, Alistair Marshall had already begun to address these issues, suggesting that what was needed was an undamaged site reflecting the many rectangular ones already known so that excavation would provide high quality data for the understanding of enclosures being damaged by natural or human agency. He maintained that the division between archaeology for research and that for rescue was, in that case, completely artificial since the former was being undertaken specifically with the latter in mind. The lack of supporting information for the region could be somewhat alleviated by nearby sites being investigated so that developments from the Iron Age to the Roman might highlight problems for regional investigation and produce a model as a working hypothesis.

Marshall, prolifically excavating round barrows and the medieval manor at Guiting Power, realised that the accidental discovery in 1971 of a pit in the side of a construction trench, dug to carry a water pipe across a spur above the river Windrush, presented him with a suitable opportunity to test his proposals. The pit had contained Iron Age pottery, animal bone, slag, flint and an infant burial. Marshall, who had published extensively on ground-based remote sensing, used resistivity and magnetometry surveys alongside magnetic susceptibility, to explore the possibility that an Iron Age site existed in an area known as The Park. He also used geochemistry to examine phosphate samples to try to determine the function of each area before the areas for excavation were chosen. The dating was ascertained by C14 samples and archaeomagnetic techniques.

The construction trench was shown to cut across a small group of adjoining rectangular enclosures covering an area of four hectares possibly lightly defended by a discontinuous ditch two metres wide and one metre deep and referred to as The Park. Five hundred square metres of its southern area were excavated, and it was found to be of Middle Iron Age date and interpreted as a 'farmstead'. The settlement clearly developed over time, perhaps two to three centuries. Marshall identified a working area, a habitation enclosure, an annexe, a foreground area and a passage trackway into the main compound. There was at least one hut, and another possible example in the annexe. The site was characterised by many closely dug storage pits, and an exceptionally large one standing on its own and identified as a 'silo', possibly for storing personal grain wealth. an indication of a high-ranking community.

Marshall then decided to excavate about 400 metres down-slope from The Park over a well sheltered, level part of the spur known as Bowsings. Here he discovered another rectangular site covering 4.6 hectares of which he excavated c.500 square metres. He interpreted this single sharp-cornered rectilinear enclosure without obvious external attachments as a 'stronghold' dated by excavation to the mid-later Iron Age, with strong evidence of survival into the late Roman period. However, while an enclosure ditch two metres deep and three metres wide was potentially defensive, the weak nature of the entrance with a 'baffle', a row of four post pits, across an entrance gap of 10 metres, would not be a deterrent to a determined aggressor. Again, a deep 'silo' pit is identified, and a hut was proposed from a possible eaves drip gully, but this appears to be of natural origin. No other features which might identify an Iron Age domestic structure were present,

and Marshall suggests they were probably erased by the Roman occupation. He postulates that during the Roman period a wooden-framed building which largely rested on the ground required few earth-penetrating features thereby leaving little trace of a structure. This negative evidence allows the possibility that there may not have been any structure in any period in that location. Alongside pottery, fragments of bone, small items of iron work and bronze and a scatter of Roman coins, the main evidence for the Roman occupation of the site were limestone roofing tiles and a hypocaust flue tile. At least two corn driers were unearthed, one placed in the entrance directly in front of the 'baffle' perhaps using the closely spaced uprights, or banks, to focus the draft into its stoke hole. Although the layout of the enclosure looks of a unified design, it may not be the elite stronghold he contended. It is conceivable that this is an industrial annexe of a villa in the valley below using an eroded late Iron Age enclosure.

Marshall suggests that the sites indicate a proto-Dobunnic (The Park) and Dobunnic (Bowsings) period when increasing need for security with greater population pressure on resources and tribal organisation during the Late Iron Age required the construction of defences. Considering our lack of knowledge of tribal identities in the later Iron Age, particularly the Dobunni, this must be treated with the utmost caution. An extensive discussion of the environment at each period of occupation of both sites is based largely on the analysis of small samples of snail fauna recovered.

The closest, more extensively excavated, sites of this period are at Manor Farm (1996) and Huntsman's Quarry (1994-6), and Marshall uses them to support the similarities and contrasts with his site, both in methodology and outcomes. He undertook geophysical surveys of other unexcavated rectangular sites nearby: Middle Ground, Wharton's Furlong and Lot's Barn, as well as outside some of the nearest hillforts. From these he develops a hierarchy of local settlement in the Iron Age, from farmstead to stronghold, often in pairs, to sub-regional centres such as Salmonsbury. However, there is always the problem of whether these structures existed at the same point in time and had similar functions and the impractical mathematics of defining population and territories. Considering the small area of excavation at The Park and Bowsings, it might have been valuable to have seen the many 'unpublished surveys', references to which are scattered throughout the text at this point and are clearly important in informing Marshall's strategies and conclusions.

This report was seemingly originally published 2004 (although excavations from 2007 are included!) and this edition is a republishing in a more accessible format and attractive typography by Archaeopress, but there is no change to content. In the first edition there was an accompanying CD of 'further information' and this edition has a link to the publisher's website. Perhaps this is where the missing surveys might have been made accessible and would be of great value to future research. There are other unsatisfactory aspects to this report. The maps, plans and photos are grouped together after the text and this makes for frustrating moving back and forth between different areas of the volume. Some of the plans are at too small a scale. Two plans of the Bowsings trench face each other with one showing the distribution of finds with north pointing to the left and opposite the location of features of the same area with north pointing to the top of the page, and both are of different scales. Although the bibliography was extensive for the period of the initial publication in 2004, a revision would have been beneficial. Some of Tom Moore's work deals directly with settlement in the Cotswolds and uses Marshall's findings. English Heritage's 'North Cotswolds Highlight Survey' of 2012 is particularly pertinent demonstrating the complex landscape of the Iron Age and actually saw Marshall's work as a 'possible exemplar' in its exploration.

Even though this report produces a wide range of conclusions based on limited evidence from a small excavation, Marshall has shown the variety of probable Iron Age sites and their possible relationships on the Cotswold dip-slopes. This demonstrates the need to focus on areas that are

drained by the rivers Windrush, Dikler and Evenlode, in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, so that we can further appreciate their association with the Upper Thames valley where the archaeology has been driven by PPG16 infrastructure with its gravel extraction challenges. While there are shortcomings, this volume has demonstrated the possibilities of remote sensing and small-scale excavation of sites in an area of enormous potential and outstanding archaeological importance.

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