

of the hill, *Insula de Burgh*, indicates its earlier island status, and suggests that Burrow is a corruption of *burgh*.³ In this context, therefore, *burgh* seems to mean more than merely *hill*, and alludes at the least to a domestic enclosure with a defensive element (O.E. *burh*, *burg*).

Previous excavations and discoveries

There is a persistent oral tradition that the hill was the site of a battle, no doubt reinforced by, if not based on, the discoveries of inhumations during 19th and 20th-century gravel digging, first noted by Redstone in 1898 (1900, 81). In 1909 fragments of Roman tile and food debris from 'Butley Ferry, Burrow Hill' were acquired by Aldeburgh Museum. These probably came from the site of the now-demolished Ferry House which lay on the southern foot of the hill. All subsequent published discoveries have been made on the hilltop. In 1936 Dr. M.J. Rendall discovered the remains of a small pot of rough hand-made black ware (Ward Perkins 1937, fig. 2), from the fill of a ditch, and two pits containing bone and charcoal. In 1946 H. Spencer and B. Brown, on behalf of Ipswich Museum, investigated two shallow patches of dark earth from which they retrieved two complete sling pellets and two fragments (Maynard 1952, 208). The discovery of the cauldron-chain in 1963 (Fig. 6) was followed in 1965 by an Ipswich Museum investigation of a pit or ditch 3.6 m wide and 0.76 m deep (Owles and Smedley 1965, 348; 1966, 189). In the bottom of this feature was a post-hole 18 cm wide which extended 0.84 m below it. In 1978 air photographs, some on infra-red film, revealed a number of anomalies in the turf cover, including what appear to be parallel ditches south-east of the summit (Fig. 1, 'B'). Other anomalies have been interpreted as indicating between three and ten ring-ditches (Lawson *et al* 1981 fig. 25).

Excavations 1978-81

On the hilltop plateau the brown sand topsoil is only 20 cm deep, having last been ploughed (by horses) in 1947. *Stetches* are visible on air photographs and bite into the gravel 45 cm below the turf. It is clear from sections (Fig. 2) that the Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon ground surfaces were higher than the bottom of the modern topsoil and have been sheared off by ploughing, no doubt assisted by sand-blows. It is difficult to estimate to what extent they have been lowered but on the summit Middle Saxon inhumations dug into the superficial deposit of sand with gravel were encountered immediately below the topsoil, suggesting a minimum loss of 0.6 m in the last thousand years. For this reason most stratigraphic sequences are based on intersecting features.

A grid system was adopted for recording purposes. The topsoil was removed mechanically with a Ford

4450 digger with the teeth of its bucket removed. The soil below was shovel-scraped and then trowelled in 10 cm spits. Despite the use of sprays, features at this level were usually indistinct, so every sherd and small find was individually plotted. In 1981 the surface of each 10 cm spit was scanned with a low-power metal detector and the positions of readings marked. When these positions were reached special care was taken to discover the cause of the reading, the detector sometimes being used again to pinpoint corroded metal undetectable by eye. Whenever the reading proved to be deeper than 10 cm the marker was replaced until the level in which the metal lay was reached. This technique accounts for the exceptionally high proportion of small finds for a Middle Saxon site.

The areas chosen for excavation, totalling 850 sq m fringe the modern gravel-pit. The north side proved to be the site of a cemetery in long use, since intersecting graves provided sequences. A radiocarbon date of about A.D. 780 was obtained for an early phase.⁴ The provisional plan (Fig. 1) simplifies the cemetery for the sake of clarity. In reality it was a chaotic jumble of human bone disturbed both by later insertions and rodent activity. All the inhumations were unaccompanied and orientated with their feet eastwards. With two possible exceptions all the skeletons were adult and it is clear that a mainly male population is represented. More than 200 inhumations have been recorded.

Traces of the wooden containers used for the dead varied. In many cases no coffin-traces or outlines could be detected. In a few the traces suggested not a container, but merely a narrow pallet or plank.

Frequently the coffin-stain occurred as a dark line where the base of the side-walls had been; sometimes 1-4 nails were found on this outline. Occasional iron hinges showed that some coffins were lidded. The most interesting coffins were U-shaped in cross-section, some apparently consisting of a narrow trough beneath the corpse. In a few instances this type of coffin curved also along its longitudinal axis and was boat-shaped. In some cases one end was truncated. The apparent truncation of the boat below Mound 2 at Sutton Hoo has been interpreted by Rupert Bruce-Mitford (1975, 127) as the first step in the development of a custom recognised by Charles Green in the 'pseudo boat-burials' of the 7th-8th centuries at Caister-on-Sea (1963, 57). It is tempting to interpret the inhumations on the former island of Burrow Hill as further examples of a custom confined in England to this part of East Anglia during the Anglo-Saxon period (Müller-Wille 1970; Fenwick 1978, 193-201). Most of the Caister inhumations had fragments of large boats laid over them, but a single grave contained a skeleton laid in a fragment of a clinker-built boat.⁵ This seemed to be the case, also, in one instance at