

WALESLAND RATH

I HAVE rarely seen an archaeologist as happy and excited as Geoffrey Wainwright when we visited him early in April at his excavation at Walesland Rath. This is in Pembrokeshire, some five miles west of Haverfordwest, and, as raths have a reputation for being

rather unproductive, he came to do a rescue excavation for the Ministry of Works without any great expectations. But now he has discovered that there is actually something there, he hopes to be able to mount a full-scale excavation over the next few years until he can

strip the whole of the interior.

Rath is an old Celtic word meaning enclosure, and raths are found chiefly in Ireland, and the Welsh examples are really outliers. They consist of a small circular bank and ditch, perhaps up to 50 yards (metres) in diameter and they date mainly to the Iron Age, when they formed fortified farmhouses. Little is known about the Welsh examples, though David Crossley has been excavating for several years at Knock Rath, near Clarboston Road, some 10 miles east, and has published an interim report and general discussion in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* for 1965.

One of the main difficulties with these raths is to distinguish them from ring-works of Medieval date. However, Mr. Crossley's analysis suggested that they were often on gently sloping ground, just below the brow of a hill. Walesland Rath fits well into this analysis in that it lies a couple of hundred yards below the brow of a hill, though, in fact, its two downhill sides are on the edge of a ravine, where the ground falls away steeply to two small streams. It has two apparent entrances, one facing up the gentle hill-slope, and the other, on the opposite side facing out onto the ravine. They were not examined, so



General view of the site

This was taken from one bank looking across the whole diameter of the Rath. On the far side the ground falls away sharply to a small ravine.