

the transition to an iron-using economy, with growing numbers of hill-forts and further development of the pottery, as basically an indigenous affair. Only future work can tell whether the first hill-forts and palisades were developed gradually, or whether they reflect some specific pressure. In the latter case, Hallstatt C incursions spring immediately to mind, but the possibilities range back through Urnfield times, and the problem of north west French connections have yet to be explored in detail. Clearly these phases of British prehistory are on

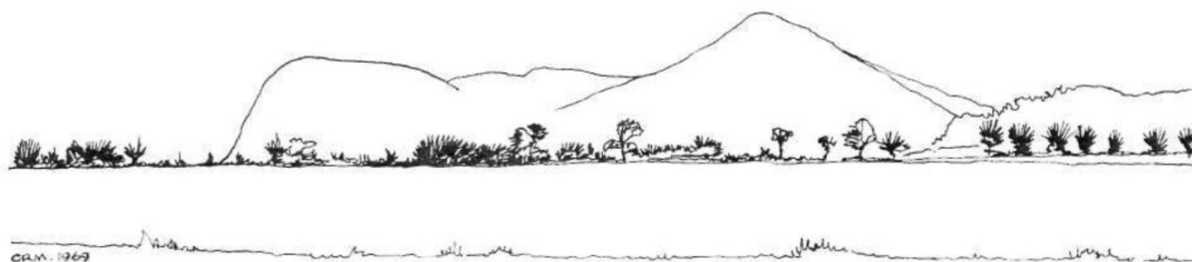
the verge of tremendous upheaval.

These notes are necessarily only a subjective outline of current trends, and suggest developments and lines of enquiry which future work may make clearer. A lot more can obviously be done, even with existing methods, material and sites, and a more open-minded approach to the evidence will assist in this. Careful excavation of palisade sites and early hill-forts will no doubt help to sort out the transition from a bronze-using, to an iron-using economy. Since the archaeological evidence by itself is so often scanty or ambiguous,

radiocarbon dating generously applied throughout the period is clearly going to play an increasingly important role, despite its coarseness and uncertainties.

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The Breiddin hills from the south-west. The hill-tort lies on the extreme left above the great dip called Craig Breiddin. In the foreground and to the left is the flood-plain of the River Severn.

THE BREIDDIN 1969

by Chris Musson

IF you wish to make your way into Central Wales, there is no better route than that afforded by the Severn Valley, where it turns westward at Shrewsbury and makes its way past Welshpool and Montgomery into the central massif. It is the route followed by the one surviving railway today, and doubtless by invading armies from time immemorial. A dozen miles past Shrewsbury there arises on the river's southern bank a group of three hills (or rather ridges), isolated in the

valley bottom from the mountains to the north and south. Known as the Breiddins or Breiddens, these peaks provide the site of one of the largest and most formidable hillforts in central Wales. Amongst an older generation of antiquarians this was sometimes thought to mark the last stand of Caratacus, where the Belgic prince, having fled from the Romans in England, carried on a desperate rearguard action in the foothills of Wales. The topography, however, does not fit the graphic descriptions

given by Tacitus, and modern scholars now either favour other sites or have given up the attempt at identification.

From the defensive point of view, the ridge on which the hillfort stands has obvious natural advantages. Its long north-western flanks fall steeply and sometimes precipitously to the valley a thousand feet below, and only the eastern and southern slopes, hidden from the valley itself, have needed man-made defences. Here two stone walls and an earthen