



Itford Hill: the settlement and cemetery lay in the field on the horizon, directly above the cows, beyond the far hedge. Today the field is ploughed except for the site of the settlement, which remains an island of downland in the middle of a cornfield.

ITFORD HILL

ONE of the classic sites of the Middle Bronze Age is the Settlement of Itford Hill, situated on the South Downs, just outside Lewes, and excavated 1949-1953 by G. P. Burstow and G. A. Holleyman and reported in the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* for 1957. The site consisted of a group of enclosures containing round huts scooped into the side of the hill and forming what has become the classic picture of a Bronze Age village. At the time, it was thought to be late Bronze Age but with the

recent redating it has become Middle Bronze Age. Indeed, there is now a radiocarbon date for it, for samples of the barley found in the settlement were submitted to Groningen, and produced a date of 1000 ± 35 b.c. (GrN 6167). If this is calibrated on the tree ring curve, it gives a date between 1230 to 1330 B.C. The whole settlement appeared to have a very short life of perhaps only some 25 years; recent suggestions that it might only have been a single family living there and occupying the houses successively for a considerable period of time remain controversial.

Last year the cemetery of the Itford Hill settlement was excavated. This was a barrow only 100 yards above the settlement, on the same gently sloping hillside, 160 yards below the brow of the ridge-way. The barrow was revealed as a very low mound in 1971 when the hillside was cleared of dense scrub and ploughed for the first time. As further ploughing will rapidly destroy what little remains, Eric Holden led a party of Sussex Rescue archaeologists with an average age of 63 (two ladies not included) who carried out excavations between September and December 1971 on what has been described as the bleakest exposed hillside in Sussex. The results were of considerable interest.

Burial in the Middle Bronze Age is currently a matter of some confusion. The dating of Middle Bronze Age pottery has recently undergone a

This article is based on information from Eric Holden.

