



Fig. 5 Record photograph of elements 1–5 of the cauldron-chain, taken by Christopher Saunders prior to conservation.

shown on the reconstruction, giving the cauldron-chain an estimated length of just over 1.9 m.

Where cauldron-chains are composed of rod-elements joined by single links, a length of chain is invariably found, as here, below the hook-element; flexibility is needed at this point so that the length may be adjusted by looping the chain around the hooks. Plain circular links are normally employed for this. The only parallel known for the laced-double links of the Burrow Hill chain is an unpublished and undated cauldron-chain from Over Fen, Cambridgeshire.¹⁹ Another anomaly is the position of element 6; in both insular and continental chains any additional rod-elements needed are placed above and not below the hooking-up device. However, the position of element 6 is confirmed by the record photographs. These also show that before conservation, individual laced-double links apparently still connected elements 2 – 3 and 8 – 9; one of them is still attached to the top of element 3. This is a unique and strange use for this type of link, which has the advantage of being able to be forged separately and joined to its fellows without welding. It is possible that these are repairs to the original chainwork, replacing the rings which one would expect to find. One such ring, it should be noted, does still depend from element 4.

Cauldron-chains are both the largest and the most long-lasting of early iron artefacts and this longevity reinforces the natural conservatism of the smith.²⁰ Few chains have been discovered in dated contexts and even these contexts must be used cautiously, since the date of manufacture may precede deposition not by decades but by centuries. The need for caution was recently highlighted by the discovery of parts of a Piggott Type II 'Belgic' chain, hitherto known in late Romano-British contexts, in a smith's hoard deposited *c.* 100 B.C. at Danebury, Hampshire (Piggott 1955; Cunliffe 1981, 12, fig. 12). Thus the question to be asked is not the age of the Burrow Hill cauldron-chain, but the earliest date at which it is likely to have been made.

This preamble is needed because the Burrow Hill chainwork has a unique combination of elements and the problem is to determine whether they represent a fusion of smithing traditions or an original design to which extraneous elements have been added. In this context the East Anglian find-spot is perhaps significant, since this region has produced a greater variety of cauldron-chains than any other in Europe. Unfortunately the majority are unstratified and unassociated finds. The unique, but unassociated, cauldron-chain from Cambridgeshire, Over Fen II, provides the closest parallel. Like the Burrow Hill chainwork it may be categorized as long (Fenwick, 1983, Appendix A) and combines twisted square-sectioned rods with laced-double links. Further similarities are the form of the top element, the hooking-up device and the pothooks. In addition a closely comparable smithing technique is evinced by the uneven twisting, the position of welds and the formation of the terminal loops and hooks. There the similarities end. While the Burrow Hill chainwork has Type I features (intermediate single rod; ringle), Over Fen II has a Type II hooked-block and an elegantly formed Y-junction. It is clear that, despite their similarities, the two chains are fundamentally different. Over Fen II is a consistent design in which individual elements which are straight from the Type I tradition have been used by a smith working in that of Type II. This cannot be said of the Burrow Hill chainwork where the inconsistency in the design and arrangement of the elements is so pronounced as to suggest that its final form could not have been the planned product of a smith working in either tradition.

For this reason it is necessary to look briefly at a) the design as a whole and b) the elements individually: a) The long arms of the chainwork show that it could have suspended a two-handled cauldron as much as 0.55 m in diameter. Y-chains date from the beginning of the Iron Age and continued to be the main type until the post-Roman period. With the introduction of cauldrons with iron bails, the single-armed type