

## **FWP23a**

Part of (Old) Chap 3 to go in `Old grassland` section

### **The field archaeology of the Down Barn area**

Down Barn is now the site of some modern barns but the site, and the area around, has been used for a long time. It is worth separate comment if only for the good state of archaeological preservation hereabouts, reflecting the fact that the land-use has been basically pasture for some 2000 years and continues to be so. In addition to the good preservation of earthworks, their elucidation is signally aided by air photography, especially some vertical APs taken by OGS Crawford on 22 June, 1924. The key one is here published for the first time (pl. %%; NMR SU1370/1).

Down Barn lies on the S side of a dry valley, Pickledean, AS *Piggledean*. Its AS context, and its role in the Charter evidence, are discussed *below* p. 00. This coombe is curving generally NW from the R. Kennet and is here, at a slight widening 180 m. above OD, about 2 km. from its mouth. It continues to climb gradually up to the NW for a further 1.5 km., finally eliding with the smooth contours of Overton Down at 220 m. above OD. It is pasture throughout, though bordered on the S for most of its course by arable. This reflects the historical fact that, in general, it marks the boundary between `old arable` and `old pasture` in the two Overton tithings; presumably it did likewise in the AS period, though this was certainly not the case in RB and prehistoric times.

From NW-SE, the main archaeological features around Down Barn are (fig. 00):

`Celtic` fields over the SE area of Overton Down on the NE side of the dene

**A terrace-way**, or double-lynchet track, running out of the dene to the NE from a turning by a former square pond; and running SE along the NE side of the dene as far as the SE end of RB settlement OD SE

Potential **RB settlement** area marked by 5 possible buildings sites immediately on the N side of the small area of uncleared sarsens marking a shallow re-entrant dropping into the dene off OD between the two ponds. The site lies immediately downhill and W of ODXII and looks remarkably like it before excavation; it could well be a part of it, unrecognised at the time of excavation.

A zone of **ridge-and furrow**, subdividable into four different localised types and areas:

    `Broad rig` N of the DL track, c 8-9 m (27 ft.) broad and laid out in furlongs, as demonstrated by OGSC (WFA 1928, pl XIX) and common over much of Oveton Down

    Similar broad rig E of the DL track and N of ODXII, probably part of the former open fields of Lockeridge tithing

Narrower rig SE of ODXII and E of the `stone circle`  
Narrow rig in a fan-like pattern running up the slope towards OD XII  
from the gateway into the NNR NE of Down Barn

`Stone circle` E of ODXII

Three **lines of sarsen stones** on the downland of OD  
along the DL track *above* where it turns to the N (on OS 25 in.)  
N of ODXII  
E of ODXII (on OS 25 in.)

A **square pond**

OD XII: an excavated **RB settlement**

Down Barn enclosure: an undated **trapezoidal earthwork enclosure**

A **round pond** at the SE end of the trapezoidal enclosure

OD South West: a large **RB settlement**

**Down Barn:** modern barns, replacing corrugated iron Dutch barns still standing into 1960s (pl. \*\*\*) on the site of the early C19 ones first shown on ?(Check) Enclosure Map 1816. The original Down Barn was built on the N edge of the open field where it ended on the downland pasture, and would have been intended for overwintering stock, notably cattle - a characteristic Wiltshire chalkland site in its position, form and function

A **round pond** in front of i.e. N of, the Barns

Two **standing stones** in the hedge-line some metres S of Down Barn: probably the two stone referred to in the E. Overton charter (AD 939, BCS ???): they are the only standing stones in the right area even though the tithing boundary does not run through them

Down Barn **cottage:** a Grade 2 Listed building, late C18 with thatched roof

Concrete foundation/floor of former **Nissen hut**, erected to service a searchlight battery during WWII, used to store straw etc. afterwards, and then used as dormitory and kitchen both during the construction of the Overton Down Experimental Earthwork (Jewell 1963) and in the mid-1960s as the HQ for the excavations of ODXI and ODXII (*below* Chaps. 5 & 6). – pjf vi.95