FWP66

Rough draft of a possible 'fourth' Fyfod excavation report, currently @ c14,000 words, assembled in about half an hour from existing text, 12. iii. 98. Pjf.

SMALL EXCAVATIONS ON FYFIELD AND OVERTON DOWNS, WILTSHIRE

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Author's Note: Fyfod Working Paper 66 = FWP 66

The excavations which are the subject of this FWP 66 were carried out as part of the Fyfod Project (Fowler 1997, a draft monograph of c.250,000 words embracing the whole of the Fyfod project). That draft is currently being revised and reduced to c.110,000 words. Removal of the data about three quite large excavations (FWP 63-5), and possibly the much less bulky material from eight smaller excavations, for publication elsewhere, and perhaps by non-conventional means, is a fundamental part of this revision. The material from these smaller excavations relevant to the objectives of the Fyfod Project has been synthesised for inclusion in the revised monograph, but of course such a use of it requires the evidence behind it to be accessible.

The opportunity is taken here to summarise results from non-Fyfod excavations on the northern downs; with other excavations in the study area off the down summarised in an appendix. They are all currently in an appendix to the monograph.

This document (FWP 66) tentatively offers an alternative way of dealing with the Fyfod smaller excavations. At present, and such is still the proposal, they exist in various chapters of the monograph as the coverage of the downland landscape proceeds chronologically and geographically. An alternative way of dealing with them would be to pull them out of the monograph for separate publication elsewhere, as is proposed for the three big excavations; or they could be pulled together as here, FWP 66 then making up a separate chapter in the monograph.

The figures have been copied from Fowler 1997, though without the implication that all would necessarily appear in a conventional, stand-alone publication; a few new graphics would be needed for such a publication e.g. a location map. The captions are also simply lifted as they stand from Fowler 1997. Those for the Plates are included here as indicators only, for the Plates themselves are not included to avoid the risk of damaging them in making copies. In any case, some will go into the revised monograph currently in prep.

No attempt has been made in assembling this single excavation report as an entity to edit it into a coherent whole at this stage. All the illustrations' monograph numbers, and their in-text cross-references, have, for example, simply been left as lifted from Fowler 1997 (not least to help in the identification of the originals for any 'new' edition of this report). Similarly, cross-references to other parts of the monograph have been left alone since an edition for publication might need to make such points in its own text. Any in-text references refer at this stage to the huge Bibliography in Fowler 1997. The references appropriate to this report will have to be pulled out of that and added at the back of this report in due course.

A key matter still to be addressed is the nature and design of the 'consultative structure' between this report (and three other much larger Fyfod ones, FWP 63-5), whether conventionally published or electronically disseminated, and the monograph on the one hand and the hard-ware archive (in Devizes Museum and at the NMR) on the other.

*Some few matters (**in bold**) in this report still require resolution. Doubtless an academic-cum-technical editor preparing a publishable version of this report will also raise a number of archaeological queries, both inconsistencies and matters where we may seem to have simply got it wrong; and those will be addressed. But essentially (with one exception) the archaeology underlying this report has been 'done' and this author does not propose to revisit it. It would be unwise for another researcher to use this report as it stands but, once it has been edited, made internally consistent and externally related to the other parts of the project's total product, it should be ready for peer review with relatively little further input from:*

Peter Fowler

DAES, University of Newcastle *12 March 1998*

References:

Fowler P.J. (July) 1997 *Landscape Plotted and Pieced. Field Archaeology and Local History in Fyfield and Overton, Wiltshire.* Draft Monograph (6 copies only), Dept. of Agricultural and Environmental Science (DAES), University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Fyfod Working Paper 63: P.J.Fowler, *Excavation within a later prehistoric field system on Overton Down, West Overton, Wilts.: land-use over 4,000 years* DAES, March 1998

Fyfod Working Paper 64: P.J.Fowler, *The excavation of a Settlement of the Fourth and Fifth centuries AD on Overton Down, West Overton, Wilts.* March DAES, 1998

Fyfod Working Paper 65: P.J.Fowler, *Excavation of the Medieval settlement of 'Raddun', Wroughton Mead, Fyfield Down, Wiltshire* DAES, March 1998

SMALL EXCAVATIONS ON FYFIELD AND OVERTON DOWNS, WILTSHIRE

P.J.FOWLER

New introduction

A Neolithic *polissoir* (OD II)

'...investigations carried out [around *polissoirs*] in the hope of discoveries have always proved unrewarding' (Lacaille 1963, 193)

The stone was discovered by Inigo Jones in 1962 and reported on, after 'repairing to the spot under his conduct', by Lacaille (*ibid*., 191) whose phrase so assuredly links the discovery to another Inigo Jones (Ucko *et al.* 19**) and Fyfod to the antiquarian tradition. Lacaille's (1963) description and discussion are so good, with excellent illustrations, that they need not be repeated here. It is important, however, to appreciate that the *polissoir* or sarsen bench had been split N-S. Its western part of unknown size had been removed at some unknown date (though reasonably imagined as C19-20, King 1968). On the one hand it seemed a remarkable stroke of fortune that the polished and grooved patch at the stone's SE (Pl. 4.00) corner had survived the stone-breakers' destruction; on the other, one wonders what was on the perhaps larger part of the stone which has disappeared. It should be additionally recorded that close and repeated examination of the bench has shown that much of its upper surface has in fact been polished; and that the 'focal patch' is itself the product of time, for some grooves cut others, and some cut through previously polished areas. Two other polished, recumbent stones have also been noted further south on Overton Down (info. G. Swanton), but long-term if unsystematic observation of thousands of sarsens during the course of the Project makes it unlikely that such stones are common now. With so many thousands removed or partly-removed, it can now never be known, however, whether such stones were formerly common.

This is merely a summary of the small excavation in 1963 which followed up the discovery of the *polissoir*, probably one of the earliest visible features on the downs. Some information about its context was, therefore, likely to be useful in a landscape sense. The main objective was to explore the possibility of Neolithic activity/settlement beside or near it.

Four small cuttings were excavated on three sides of the stone, but none on the W where a block of sarsen had long been removed (fig. 3.00). No structures or significant features were found in plan and the stratigraphy was consistently straightforward (Pl. HH, fig. 3.2 with layer details in caption). Layers 1 and 2, essentially what were to become the so familiar topsoil of humus underlain by worm-sorted flints, were disturbed, probably by rabbits as much as the sarsen-breakers. The material appeared to be redeposited on top of an earlier ground surface, inferentially of medieval or

earlier date (*see below*). At the N end of the sarsen bench, however, the lip of a pit or trench was partly excavated. It showed clearly in plan as a feature dug into the top of an old but undated surface at the level of the disturbed top of the Clay-with-Flints; it was filled with flinty, clayey humus similar to that into which it was cut. In the top of that filling was a heavily weathered sarsen *c* 60 x 45 cms and a cluster of smaller, broken sarsen stones. The hole was at least 45 cms deep, its bottom as excavated marked by an increase in the density of flints. The evidence, though incomplete, suggested very strongly that the feature excavated was part of a hole dug to support the *polissoir* as an upright stone. The excavation was stopped, however, because enough had been done to demonstrate that, whatever the structural interest (which others may wish to explore), the immediate vicinity of the *polissoir* seemed unlikely to contribute significantly to our landscape objectives.

In a sense the most interesting landscape point to emerge from this small exercise was represented, not by Neolithic revelations but by a half-penny of King John (1197-1206, identified by the late Hugh Shortt, then curator of Salisbury Museum). Near it was an iron wedge; both were found in layer 2 at a depth of *c* 15 cms. The wedge exactly fitted the wedge-marks along the split W edge of the recumbent stone, the *polissoir*, which for reasons unknown was left by the stone-breakers. There was also at 20 cms depth half of an iron horse-shoe, probably of late or post-medieval date. This somewhat unexpected evidence seemed to indicate active stone-breaking *c*1200 AD at the time that people were living not so far away at Wick (*below* in Chap 12) and possibly beginning to occupy *Raddun* (*below* in Chap. 5); with perhaps later visits too.

Earlier activity was indicated by 20-30 flint flakes (*see* Everton flint report) including 3 micro-flakes, 8 sarsen chips and a sarsen 'flake'; but there was no spread of stone debris of the sort that one might expect from stone-axe manufacture had chunks of alien stone or local flint or sarsen been being roughly shaped here (*cf* Bradley and Claris ref in PPS). Polishing axe-heads already prepared from roughouts, the function which the sarsen *polissoir* itself suggests, would not leave much material. Only the sarsen material even hinted at the possibility of stone axe-manufacturing, and to remark thus is special pleading since sarsen axes are rare (CHECK this statement with ?Isobel Smith/ TWA Neo. expert?). More interesting is the possibility that the stone, then much larger than now, once stood upright. A larger excavation around its N end would be necessary to settle the matter but, if it was once a standing stone, presumably that was before it was used as a *polissoir*. Such a sequence would contrast with polished sarsens re-used in the West Kennet Avenue and in the West Kennet long barrow (Burl 1979, ++, and Piggott 1963, %%).

Excavation OD II did not, then achieve its initial objectives, rather bearing out Lacaille's expectations in the opening quotation and supporting his interpretation that such *polissoirs* were likely to be 'open places' (1963, 193). It produced two unexpected

results, however, of considerable landscape interest some 4000 years apart. A somewhat squat upright stone *c* 2.10 m. tall and 1.80 m. wide may well have stood here in early-mid-Neolithic times before it was laid flat to use for polishing - perhaps grinding might be a better word? - stone axes, presumably in the 3rd millennium if not earlier. And this same spot is then witness to sarsen stone-breaking being under way by at latest the late C12/early C13.

Stone structure (cutting OD III; Pl. 3.00, figs. 3.00, 3.00)

Slightly uphill of and just a few metres NW of the *polissoir* is a somewhat irregular line of sarsens, unclear in form and nature in 1963 but now interpreted as the remains of a former clearance boundary of land to the north. In 1995 it was much more clearly visible as it extends SW, appearing as the remains, incomplete and probably robbed, of what was originally a line of upright and close-packed sarsen stones of the sort elsewhere on the downs delineating the boundaries of fields; but it is not visibly connected to anything and does not readily fit in with the nearest field patterns to W or E. At what was thought to be its ENE end in 1963, when the feature was obscured by bushes, brambles and nettles, a small embanked depression appeared to be associated physically with visible 'wall' stones at a slight suggestion of a bend towards the *polissoir.* Had the point been as clear then as now, this small excavation would not have taken place. It was meant to be a single cutting merely to check whether any structure existed which might be, or have been, related to either or both the *polissoir* and the Beaker occupation which by then was known to exist at OD I (*below*).

The main excavated feature, the 'embanked depression', was a pit which cut everything else including the topsoil. It was almost certainly recent (fig. 3.00): a Home Guard or other military origin seems most likely. It seemed to be the source of a line of 'cob' which ran W-E through the original N-S cutting and N-S through the W-E extension, as if passing through a right angle. This chalky material, which looked like a wall foundation with 'spill' to either side, proved to be but a few centimetres thick and to lie on top of a former topsoil i.e. it was the upcast from the bottom of the pit where it cut into Chalk below Clay-with-Flints.

The short length of three stones exposed showed the sarsen wall to conform to the description above: a line of single sarsens side by side, partly under the chalk 'cob' and with a pile-up of material from the pit on their N side. The stones themselves sat on rather than in a flinty layer between the top of the Clay-with-Flints and the bottom of the former topsoil, suggesting that their placement was not too long ago i.e. after the formation of the characteristic worm-sorted layer 2. A line of sarsens roughly placed at the edge of marginal land clearance in the C18 or C19 is a distinct possibility, though the line of sarsens was undated archaeologically.

Nevertheless, 24 separate finds-contexts were recorded in this small excavation, 13 of them 'flint flakes' in layer 2 or the top of the Clay-with-Flints. A sarsen flake occurred in the last; and a leaf-shaped flint point, a beautiful implement, occurred in layer 2 right at the S end of the cutting. Overall, here was the same sort of material in a similar context to that in OD II, suggesting that the area was indeed one of activity in one or more phases during the 3rd millennium +/- a century or two (*see below* OD I).

From OD II and III, therefore, tiny excavations close together around the 244 m. (800 ft.) contour, enough evidence was produced to hint at the following phases in the development and use of this particular local landscape:

i. Standing stone: early/mid Neolithic
ii. Axe-grinding bench, and some flint/stone-working: mid/late Neo
iii. Flint-working/?occupation: late Neo/EBA
vi. Sarsen-breaking: *c* AD 1200
vii. Military activity: ?1940s

Linear ditch (OD I; Pl. qq, figs. 3.4)

This linear feature was and is a bank and ditch for much of its length and has been interpreted as a track at least in parts (F.4 in Bowen and Fowler 1962; Lacaille 1963, 190: 'credibly part of an ancient trackway'; discussed above in Chap. 2, p. 00, Chap 3, p. 00, and *below* pp. 00, 00). It was important to examine its structure or structures, and to date it and its phases, because it stretched W-E right across the N part of the study area and was related *en passant* to a number of features. It therefore provided a crucial horizontal datum in landscape terms, with a potential for both functional and chronological information. 4 ft. wide cuttings in such a wide landscape were clearly not going to answer all questions, for the chances of finding stratified and dateable evidence were small; but it was hoped that by placing them carefully in the light of fieldwork some relative dating and possibly structural evidence might be established. In a conscious pattern of controlled variation, OD I was placed close to the highest point of the bank and ditch's course on Upper Chalk, immediately E and slightly down-slope of the Ridgeway (fig. 3.00). It was also not far from the *polissoir*. TD VIII was meant to provide a marked contrast, testing whether morphological form varied with topographical and geological situation. It was cut *c* 0.5 km. E of and below OD I, on Clay-with-Flints and SW-facing at a point where clearly defined, stone-walled fields were laid off south from the bank (*above* in Chap 3, Pl. 3.00, fig. 3.00). TD IX was higher up the slope of Totterdown, again on Clay-with-Flints but carefully sited to test the field

deduction that the ditch continued up-slope under a 'Celtic' field after the track along it had turned off to the SE (*above* Chap 3, p. 00).

This part merely describes the excavations through the bank and ditch, beginning with OD I close to the two excavations just described (fig. 3.00); and then, after a brief discussion of the north end of Overton Down, moving on to the other two cuttings through it on Totterdown (TD VIII and IX; *below* p. 00).

OD I: excavation showed the slight remains of a bank to survive on the S side of the ditch. Its rear was marked by a sarsen stone at the foot of the slight superficial rise, and by the end of a tenuously-surviving old ground surface. In it and its erosion products at the rear were 3 flint flakes five, probably Beaker/EBA, sherds. The ditch to the N was 1.34 m. deep below the OLS, cut entirely into Chalk though presumably it had originally cut through a thin layer of Clay-with-Flints. The main features of the ditch filling were the relatively large amount of structureless humic, not chalk, deposit, and the near-horizontal layer of chalk lumps across the upper part of that humic material (fig. 3.00). The former is interpreted as the product of erosion, perhaps in view of its position high on the downs at least in part from aerial deposition; the latter is interpreted as the surface of a trackway laid in the top of what at the time would have been a slight linear depression physically but may also (still?) have been a boundary. The same zone contained a Beaker sherd, two flint flakes and an iron nail. The first were presumably residual at that level, weathering out from the ditch sides; the last is a small piece of evidence on which to hang a landscape but it does not stop the trackway level being Romano-British, as was guessed at the time, and now able to be seen as part of a major re-organisation evidenced over the whole of the study area (*above* Chap 2, p. 00, *below* Chap. 12, p. 00).

The landscape and structural sequence evidenced in this cutting is therefore of a Beaker activity area cut through by a long ditch and covered by its bank. At the foot of Avebury Down to the W this same ditch cuts through some 'Celtic' fields (VAP insert ref no.) so a post-Beaker horizon is not perhaps surprising. Conversely, other fields in the same area are laid off from it (fig. 2.00; *cf* ditch/fields relationship in vicinity of cutting TD VIII *below,* p. 00). After a long period of deposition, the line of the ditch at OD I was probably re-used as a track after receiving a chalk surface, probably (though not so-dated independently here) *c* AD 100. The earthwork grassed over and has remained undisturbed at this point ever since (though quarried away a few metres to the W).

This evidence and its interpretation can be merged with that from OD II and III *(above*) to suggest a local landscape sequence for this northern end of Overton Down:

i. Standing stone: early/mid Neolithic
ii. Axe-grinding bench, and some flint/stone-working: mid/late Neo
iii. Flint-working/?occupation with Beaker pottery: late Neo/EBA
iv. Boundary bank and ditch (+? field wall): MBA/LBA
v. Trackway along BA boundary ditch: *c* AD 100
vi. Sarsen-breaking: *c* AD 1200
vii. Field-clearance and arable to north C18-19
viii. Military activity: ?1940s

This area clearly has a high potential for producing further information about several matters, its main significance probably lying in its hints of activity and structure in the (fourth?) third and second millennia BC. These small excavations were suggestive rather than conclusive but together, and at minimal cost, they provided an outline of landscape sequence in a fairly unpromising-looking *locale* towards the higher northern limits of the study area.

Linear ditch F.4 continued, **Totterdown** (TD VIII and IX) (Pl. VV, figs.3.5, 3.6)
The linear ditch sectioned in OD I *above* as part of a localised complex was further examined in its own right as a significant landscape feature. It was next examined with a single trench (TD VIII) across the ditch and its slight bank on its south at a point, roughly a third of the way up the SW-facing slope of Totterdown, where 'early' stone-walled fields appeared to be laid off from it (*above* Chap. 2, p. 00, fig. 2.00; and *cf* comments on ditch/field relationships in previous section).

Remains of the bank were very slight, represented by a thickening of a layer of small flints and a single sarsen stone lying on disturbed Clay-with-Flints at the 'front' (fig. 3.00). Two (EBA?MBA? CHECK) sherds came from this disturbed layer, which was cut by the inner edge of the ditch. Its dimensions were similar to those in cutting OD I, though here it was cut into Clay-with-Flints, not Chalk. The filling was uncomplex, indicating a long process of deposition in its progression from coarser soil with large flints in its pointed base to a fine brown (wind-blown?) soil beneath the topsoil.

Unexpectedly, given its apparently remote position, the ditch produced seven stratified artefacts. Three sherds, all ?E/MBA urn, and a flint flake occurred in the primary fill among the large flints low in the point of the ditch bottom. Almost certainly this material weathered out of the Clay-with-Flints subsoil, probably in

the first few years after the ditch was dug. Two further sherds, respectively on and just above a tip-line, may have been similarly derived and come to rest on a temporary surface stabilised during the ditch's depositional development. The same could be said about both of the next artefacts higher in section, a sherd and a flint flake. The last lay slightly up-slope to the north, and could have come from the outer, northern ditch side; but all the other artefacts almost certainly derived from the south, either weathering out of the disturbed subsoil or - a different scenario, - from post-construction activity on the bank. The two sherds under the bank incline interpretation towards the former.

This cutting suggested, therefore, that some E/MBA activity occurred here which was subsequently overlaid and cut through by a bank and ditch. Given the landscape nature of the Fyfod enquiry overall, the evidence is not surprisingly interpreted further in terms of an area of manuring for cultivation, perhaps in fields, becoming more orderly with a new bank and ditch marking the edge of cultivation and, if they did not already exist, fields being laid out systematically from it. The sherds obviously provide a *terminus post quem* for this change which, in the complete absence of any later dating evidence, hint that it may well have occurred around the middle of the 2nd millennium BC.

The same bank and ditch was also sectioned higher up Totterdown, again where Clay-with-Flints overlay Upper Chalk (cutting TD IX, fig. 3.00; fig. 3.00; Pl. 3.00). The cutting was planned as much to demonstrate that the feature existed at this point as it was to date it; for the 'obvious' earthwork had ended (on OS) and its apparent continuation had swung off to the SE as a low, double-lynchet trackway (Pl. 3.00, fig. 3.00). It was noted, however, that if the linear ditch had continued its line was along the NW edge of a 'Celtic' field, suggesting the possibility that the makers of the field knew of the ditch and respected its line as a boundary.

The bank was relatively well-preserved, having been respected at this point by the cultivation which had occurred in the 'Celtic' field. Its southern edge had been a sarsen drystone revetment of which some of the lowest two courses remained. From it had collapsed a spread of stones over a very thin layer of flinty soil. In this protective context, four grooves had survived, each scratched into the surface of the Chalk for a depth of *c* 1-1.5 cms. They were slightly asymetrical in profile. The southernmost ran somewhat diagonally across the cutting; the other three were fragmentary but all four were parallel to each other and approximately parallel to the rear revetment of the bank. They failed to re-appear in a small test-pit to their west where the protective context was also absent.

The grooves were interpreted as ard-marks. Their very specific location prompted the thought that they may have been created when extra pressure was applied to the ard during a ploughing-up of the headland alongside the fixed field boundary at this point. In contrast, a few metres to the SW, cultivation within the 'Celtic' field had passed over both the bank and the top of the ditch, the outer edge of the ditch apparently becoming the edge of the field. At the point excavated, the bank's revetment was the field edge, and the creation of a slight negative lynchet at its foot seems to have reduced the amount of cultivable soil and the whole of the Clay-with-Flints subsoil. The underlying Chalk was thus able to 'receive' the ard-marks. The variability of such evidence was demonstrated by its non-existence a mere 1 m. to the W where a small cutting showed no ard-marks in the subsoil. A single grog-tempered (early?) RB sherd on top of layer 2 flints i.e. at the bottom of the topsoil, was the only artefact from TD 9.

The bank itself lay directly on top of Clay-with Flints, consisting of a matrix of flinty soil with sarsens in it on the south and smaller sarsens on its top in the centre. It had originally been fronted on the ditch side by a drystone revetment but all that remained *in situ* was a ledge cut into the subsoil where it had presumably stood. Flints lay on the ledge, trailing down into the ditch behind a block of the revetment which had slipped down as a small but cohering piece of drystone masonry. The stones had come to rest in the top of the main filling in the ditch centre, a brown, stone-free humus equivalent to the similar material in OD I (*above)*. Below it was a layer of flinty soil and, in the rounded ditch bottom, the weathered product of eroded subsoil containing flecks of charcoal. Maybe these reflected a phase of land-clearance by burning before or at the time of the ditch-digging, but what is reasonably clear is that the banks stood, drystone walled to both back and front, for some considerable time. The collapse of the front revetment was certainly relatively late in the ditch's depositional history, and perhaps absolutely too. Indeed, in the light of evidence specifically from FL I (*below*) and generally, the possibility exists that the stone structural elements may relate to the early RB phase. The only artefact from this small excavation was probably of that period (*above).* Three sarsen stones and a heap of sarsen chippings also lay high in the filling along the ditch's outer edge, presumably remnant of some 'late' sarsen-breaking. Subsoil seemed to have been 'weeping' into the ditch until late in its depositional sequence but the indications were that grass finally grew over the filling a long time ago. That the ard-marks appeared to be related to the bank suggested the bank and ditch were prehistoric, and no evidence countermanded that.

In general, the bank and ditch appeared from excavated evidence from three cuttings to be later than Beaker/EBA (Cuttings OD I, TD VIII) and earlier than

RB (OD IX). The absence of EIA pottery from all cuttings may be significant, suggesting the linear boundary belonged to an early phase of landscape development. This too is hinted at by the association with a block of stone-walled fields at the foot of Totterdown, independently suggested as 'early' on morphological grounds. Overall, the bank and ditch F.4 as a long land boundary was not closely dated but is most likely to have originated in the mid/late 2nd-millennium BC. Its functions, first as a boundary feature and, more circumspectly, as a RB track, seem more certain.

Totterdown: a field system and cup-marked stone (TD I-III) (Pl. GG, figs. 3.5, 3.6)

'Totterdown' is almost certainly a modern name, first appearing on C19 OS maps with no obvious antecedents. The small area of 'window' 2 was probably part of the *pastura vocata Dyllinge* of the 1567 Pembroke Survey, a name reflected in Dillon Down of 1811 when the name 'Overton Sheep Down' was also used. Smith called it 'Ruckley Down' in 1885. Clearly of pastoral use for at least four centuries, Totterdown nevertheless showed in its earthworks former arable field patterns of at least four phases, respectively medieval, early Roman (our main concern here), probably EIA or earlier, and an even earlier (?BA) phase associated with ditch F.4 as already discussed (*above* p. 00, 'window' 1). All are visible on Pl. GG.

A distinct field system isolated early in the project was planned and published (Fowler 1967, 00, fig. 0; Fowler and Evans 1967, 00, fig. 0). The field system incorporated a cup-marked sarsen stone (Pl. UU; Lacaille 19**), possibly hinting that both could well have belonged to the same broad cultural and chronological horizon. Fieldwork soon dismissed that idea, showing that the stone belonged to an earlier phase of land-use and had probably only been enclosed accidentally within a later field system. Nevertheless, the stone is of considerable interest in its own right, for such is rare in southern England. Quite why it should be here at all is unclear. There are no analogues in the study area, nor any obvious context in the immediate locality except in an area of cultivation perhaps divided into fields sometime in the 2nd millennium BC.

Four small cuttings were excavated through one field and three of its boundaries; another cutting was excavated through a field boundary some way away for contrast (fig. 3.5). The boundaries were slight, low banks or lynchetted banks rather than simply lynchets; they did not, nor do they, show as clearly on the ground as in Professor St. Joseph's superb air photograph (Pl. 4.00). The aims of the excavation were, as usual, to date the field system and to see if their boundaries contained any structure.

Cutting II (?) in the middle of a field provided the baseline against which to compare the sections through the field boundaries. It showed a straightforward three-layer stratigraphy on Clay-with Flints, with the top of that subsoil disturbed in layer 3. Essentially, all the field edge cuttings showed similar evidence, notably in the insertion of an extra layer between 2 and 3. This was taken to be the remains of a bank or the slight accumulation of ploughsoil against it. It may even have been just the piling up of soil against and on nothing more than an unploughed strip , that is a baulk, between arable plots. In cutting ?? in particular it looked very much as if the 'bank' effect was largely being created by such a baulk, accentuated by a furrow cut through the then-existing topsoil to either side of it. Other than such possibilities, the field boundaries contained no structure.

The dating evidence was reasonably clear. The cuttings indicated that a scatter of prehistoric pottery (but again no EIA sherds) underlay the area, hinting that probably BA cultivation had occurred here as seemed to be the case at cutting TD VIII on the same slope to the NW (*above* p.00). The decorated stone may have been related to that activity. The field system itself was dated by a small number of early Roman sherds, one or two of them from particularly significant contexts (fig. 4.00). There was no material of later date.

Probably the plan is wrong in indicating the long straight, NW-SE bank as being part of the original layout; that was of long rectilinear fields on a NE-SW axis. Their boundaries appear now on air photographs (Pl. 4.00, fig. 3.5) to underlie the larger NW-SE bank which nevertheless, even if structurally later, still seems to respect the overall RB arrangement.

At the time of the original investigation and publication, it was thought that this clearly-defined and morphologically distinct field system was an isolated group of fields outlying on high, marginal land. It can now be seen that they have a context, even if they are locally distinct, in a general re-arrangement of land allotment and use early in the Roman period (*above* p.00 and *below* p.00).

The excavation

FL I was excavated by hand, layer by layer. The soils varied in their proportions of chalk, humus and flint but essentially they all consisted of small granules and had clearly been pulverised to varying degrees. Fig. 4.4 makes the main stratigraphical points graphically. To provide a time-frame for it immediately, layer I/top of 23 contained a scatter of shrapnel fragments, presumably of late 1940s vintage (*above* Chap. 3, p.00); layer 23, the worm-sorted flinty residue from layer 1, contained a scattering of EIA and RB sherds, mainly the latter. The bulk of the cultivation may well, then, have taken place by soon after AD 100, by

which time the top of the lynchet, essentially the present ground surface, had reached its existing height above the old ground surface. The question of dating is discussed further *below*.

Below layer 23 was as much as 1.20 m. of accumulated deposits (*see* caption to fig. 4.4 for layer descriptions). At their base, lying directly on solid Upper Chalk, layer XX was a light brown soil with flints and layer 11 was a dark ginger soil with flints, small chalk lumps and flecks of charcoal. The last was presumably a disturbed, probably cultivated, old ground surface. Under it and cut into Chalk was a shallow depression filled with light brown soil, flints and chalk lumps, probably a tree-hole (Evans 1972, fig. 120; similar to one carefully excavated and similarly interpreted at the Overton Down experimental earthwork 1992, Bell *et al* 1996, 76-77, 140, figs. 7.12, 7.13. *See also* pp. 00, 00)).

Well down the slope of the scarp forming the front of the lynchet, and very near the present grass surface, was a small drystone wall (*cf.* TD IX *above*). All the rest of the stratification was related to it. Layers 24a, 24b and 38c had piled up behind it, but in each case the crest of each layer was well back from the wall itself. An increase in the amount of humic material immediately behind the wall characterised the deposit between layers 24a and 38c: perhaps it resulted from turf and topsoil developing and then buried in a protected niche immediately behind the wall.

The wall itself stood on a ledge only 15-25 cms. wide at the W end of layer 14. It consisted entirely of smallish sarsen stones, characteristically 30 cms. across, all broken and packed around with large flints making up the body of the structure. A sarsen saddle quern was built into the bottom course (fig. 4.4). The wall had tipped forward a little, not surprisingly in view of the 1.5 m. of ploughsoil which had accumulated behind it. Yet it had never been a large structure, for no tumble or collapse lay to its front nor was there any sign of robbing. Two or three courses at most probably constituted its original form. It would not therefore have kept animals in or out so its most likely function, if not just decorative, was perhaps tenurial, marking the edge of a property as well as a field.

Layer 14 stopped immediately W of the wall, below it being the steep slope of bare Chalk in the negative lynchet. Some material from the wall and behind it had slipped in but westwards the stratification was topsoil on Chalk.

Slightly more than 100 sherds were retrieved from FL I, all small and many abraded. Their presence can in general be regarded as the accidental by-product of manuring. Even those explicable in the lynchet as derived from the OLS may have arrived there originally with manure in fields earlier than those of the 'drystone-wall' phase. The sherds range in date from possibly Neolithic to 2nd century AD, with nothing later. In general, the sherds became earlier with depth. Layer 14 seemed to be a prehistoric ground surface, probably cultivated in the 2nd millennium BC if not earlier. Interpretation then envisaged it being

disturbed (again?) in the mid-1st millennium when the visible field system of the 'drystone wall' phase was laid out (Bowen and Fowler 1962, 105).

Re-examination of the stratification, contexts and all the pottery indicates, however, that while layer 14 was in fact of late Neolithic/EBA date, the wall itself was inserted in the later 1st century AD and not during the pre-Roman Iron Age.

(*The following expostulation to myself was written 6 months ago. I have now retrieved the box of vital sherds from Devizes Mus. and will rejudge them. The 'final' text will then follow (I hope) but meanwhile the following reflects the appropriate uncertainty on a key point in the landscape and its history:*
*"***From here onwards, this has to be rechecked in light of PJF re-assessment in light of further discussion, Mar '97, with L Mepham, TWA: Sherds 63, 67, 46 and 65 in particular, are all unequivocally RB; and equally unequivocal are sherds 46, on the surface of layer 14, and 83, a rim of an everted rim jar actually under the wall. One of the major implications is the obvious difficulty that there would seem insufficient time between, say, later CI and mid-C2, for lynchets up to 3 m. high to accumulate on a 3º slope as a result of 'normal' cultivation. But to say as much begs the question. Perhaps, in abnormal circumstances of widespread, State-controlled land-exploitation by conquerors, a certain amount of digging and levelling off was undertaken in order to make better fields to begin with. The little wall could well be explained as a marker line in such a scenario. The point is further discussed *below*, p. 00. At this juncture, the 'drystone-wall' phase of fields on Fyfield Down is taken as fitting in with the locally widely-attested period of rapid and substantial landscape re-organisation towards the end of CI (*above* Chap 2, p. 00; *below* Chap. 11, p. 00).**
YES, BUT THE POINT IS THAT NOW IT CAN BE SEEN THAT THE LYNCHET GRADUALLY ACCUMULATED IN THREE PHASES PROBABLY IN eba, mba AND lba/eia, REACHING BOTTOM OF LAYER 2 HEIGHT BY SAY 600 BC. Layers 1 & 2 then accumulated, to be ploughed up c 100 AD in new Roman fields defined by stone walls inserted into front of already existing lynchets."

After finding the western side of this particular early field defined late in its history by a wall, we excavated a further cutting (**FL2)** on its eastern side to establish whether a wall also existed there. The remains of a wall were indeed found, much more disturbed than in FL I but of the same size and form. It rested on an OLS and an accumulation of chalky soils had piled up behind it but there was no good dating evidence in this case.

Since it now appeared likely that the whole field was enclosed by a wall, two small and rapidly excavated cuttings (**FL 4 and 5,** fig. 4.00) checked the presence or otherwise of a wall or walls at the SW corner of the same field. Only one course of a former wall existed

in FL 4; it did not bend round the field corner to the E and, although the evidence was inconclusive, if it continued at all it went straight on southwards. There was just the possibility of a gap, perhaps a gateway, in a southern continuation (FL 5), though the point excavated is shown as damaged by traffic ruts in Allen's 1934 air photograph (*frontespiece*); but then perhaps the downland track went for that point because the obstacle of a lynchet was absent.

A small test pit (**FL 3**, fig. 4.00) was also dug to see if the soil was a greater depth at the centre of a rig in a pattern of ridge-and-furrow east of the 'Celtic field already examined. It was not. The topsoil was 20 cms deep, the usual thickness above the Chalk, though here without a flinty layer 23. Two implications were that the latest, presumably medieval, ploughsoil had been flint-free, and that the undulations of the ground surface reflected, or were reflected by, similar undulations in the surface of the bedrock.

Conclusion

This little exercise on Fyfield Down succeeded in dating the lynchets and the fields they bounded to a beginning and periodic use from *c* 2000 BC onwards, ending with a terminal phase associated with drystone walling of the late 1st century AD. The earlier phases of activity, perhaps initially occupation but thereafter cultivation, involved ground disturbance and the accumulation of a lynchet along a line which seems to have remained a constant feature in a changing landscape throughout the 2nd and 1st millennia BC, even though cultivation was not apparently continuous. Nevertheless, these famous Fyfield Down 'Celtic' field lynchets are in their existing form of early Roman date and were, at least in part, built. At an early stage of their last use, with drystone walling just showing among arable fields, the landscape would have looked totally different from the grass-covered downland sheep-runs and horse-gallops of today.

Down Barn Enclosure: prehistoric stratigraphy, Roman occupation and a post-Roman earthwork (Pls. @@; figs. 7.1, 7.4)

This particular earthwork enclosure is described in its landscape context *above*, p. 00. Trapezoidal in plan, it lies across the bottom of the narrowing dry valley *c*. 250 m. north uphill of Down Barn, with old pasture upslope to its immediate north on Overton Down and permanent arable similarly sited to its south. The former contains, only 150 m. distant, late Roman site OD XII (below); the latter may well have been continuously under cultivation since the 10th century AD (Chap. 8).The enclosure's northern ditch cuts along a narrow terrace, or double lynchet track, on the combe's north side, apparently a continuation down the dry valley of the RB track running right across the Overton Down landscape (figs. 2.1, 15.1). A round pond lay outside an entrance on the enclosure's southern and downhill side. Inside, a low platform lay against the bank on each of the long sides. The whole site has been smoothed over by some form of light

cultivation in the early 1970s, so the sharpness of the earthworks and some of the critical detail existing when surveyed in the early 1960s have now gone; but the site is still visible (Pl. <>), and damage appears to be only superficial. The position, shape and size, and relationships of this enclosure suggested it was 'late' in the local landscape sequence and likely to be of considerable significance. This has proved to be the case.

Excavation has occurred twice since the enclosure's discovery in November, 1961, on both occasions with this author's encouragement in the hope of advancing the Fyfod project. Firstly, J. Scantlebury with boys from Marlborough College Archaeological Society started a fairly ambitious trial excavation on four afternoons a week through the summer term of 1962. The work was not renewed but enough had been done to establish the basic stratigraphy. Furthermore it was related to a Roman horizon which predated or was contemporary with the enclosure, a crucial point which has now been clarified (*below*). An interim report was published (Scantlebury in Fowler 1963, 349-50). A second excavation was carried out in 1995 in circumstances described *below.*

The 1962 excavation

The following is a summary of the published interim report (Fowler 1963, 349-50), with interpretative interpolations by this author in [square brackets].

A grid of 10 ft. squares was laid out across the centre of the enclosure but was not completely excavated; and a section was cut through the enclosure bank and ditch on the SW. The ditch was *c* 1.20 m. deep, V-shaped and cut through a humic layer into the Chalk. The bank was merely a low spread of soil and occupation material. Within the enclosure, all over the area excavated, was a rubbly spread of occupation material, "rich in pottery, bone and iron" but without evidence of a substantial structure. "Traces of what may be a small hut were found, defined by two parallel lines of small broken sarsens with a floor of packed chalk between" but the "complete ground plan" was not recovered. [This is the only record of this 'structure', the exact location and stratigraphical context of which are unknown. There is no good reason, however, to doubt the existence of a feature as described. It description now reads similarly to that of the also somewhat ambivalent 'Building 5' subsequently excavated on the adjacent Site OD XII though only recognised in post-excavation analysis (*above*, p.00). This feature was probably in the central area of the western 'platform'. The doubt about its context is only whether it was associated with or laid into the (here apparently late RB) occupation level. The 'platform' itself is now known to be post-Roman (*below*), and so too would be this 'structure' if it was actually on, rather than covered by, the 'platform'. It

is one of two possible excavated structures recorded by the 1962 excavation (for the other *see below*) from inside the enclosure, though a "possible building" was descried in the slight earthworks on the 'platform' on the E side of the enclosure. The critical evidence has now been smudged out but re-interpretation of the plan (fig. 4.00) would suggest the earthworks in question may have been residual elements of the terrace-way, not a building.

The 1962 excavation produced "large quantities of pottery and a considerable amount of animal bone, of which a high proportion appears to be sheep, iron nails, three very eroded bronze coins and the pin of a bronze brooch." Among the pottery were "a fairly soft red ware", a "rather harder, light grey ware", and a "black ware". The last was subdivided into a wheel-made fabric with "a fine burnished surface", and a much more gritty fabric, "apparently hand-made" (This sounds like BB1 and BB2. -pjf). Recognisable forms in this black ware included "low-sided dishes and fairly straight-walled pots with a characteristic outer flange just below the rim". The conclusion was that "the whole assemblage would fit quite well into a late Romano-British context towards the close of the 4th century or possibly rather later." "Two or three stray medieval sherds" were also found.

The occupation layer rested on "a sterile layer of fine, dark brown earthy clay, some 3 ft. [0.90 m] thick at its deepest point and thinning out towards the sides of the valley." [Scantlebury was not to know this but the material was remarkably similar in appearance and texture to that in the upper centre of the linear ditch across Overton Down North and Totterdown, as exposed in cuttings OD I and TD VIII, *above* p.00]. Two suggestions were made. One, that this layer [illustrated here in Pl. 7.00 from 1995] might "represent a flood deposit in the valley bottom", a preference for this interpretation being expressed because of "the archaeological sterility of the layer" [now known not to be the case, *see below*]. Second, that the soil accumulation in the combe bottom was "the result of accelerated soil creep and rain wash from arable fields on or immediately above its sides" [an interpretation now tending to be preferred, *below* Chaps. 11 and 12, pp. 00, 00].

Beneath this thick humic layer was another rubble layer lying on the Chalk. It apparently contained "a grouping of large sarsen boulders suggesting some form of rectangular structure" [but again this was not followed up and this published phrase is the only record]. From the layer came about half-a-dozen "sherds of undecorated, coarse pottery, rich red-brown in colour and containing a large amount of crushed chalk." [PJF saw some pottery from this layer at the time and thought that one or two sherds might

have been 'Beaker', provisionally thinking that in general an EBA phase was probably being indicated].

Unfortunately, the excavation was uncompleted and the records of it disappeared. Considerable efforts to trace them, and/or the excavator, failed. When, therefore, in a remarkable return to the project's origins, a site was needed in 1995 for a small-scale training excavation to follow up an adult education archaeology course for Bristol University, it was suggested that the 1962 cuttings be re-emptied and their sides cut back to record what was known to be, from memory, a particularly important sequence not just about the enclosure but about the landscape's evolution.

The 1995 excavations

The 1962 excavation plan had been surveyed on to the original field survey at the time so it was possible to relocate the trenches exactly. Furthermore, the outlines of the actual trenches were momentarily visible before new growth of the very, very short, sheep-grazed grass over the site early in 1995. Under the direction of the tutor (and co-landowner), Gill Swanton emptied the trenches of the main NE-SW cutting with a mechanical back-acter. Work to clean up and record the archaeology proceeded during the first part of 1995. So much data and material were recovered that a full excavation report is now being prepared for publication by the director elsewhere (probably in *WAM.*). Meanwhile she has provided full access to the evidence and material to enable the following note to be prepared with particular reference to the matters germane to the Fyfod project i.e. this is a highly selective note by PJF, not GS. We are especially grateful for the photograph of the section (Pl. 7.00), published in preference to a drawn section which, it was agreed, should not be abstracted to go with a short note rather than the full report; for the use of Dr. Sheail's environmental report (STILL TO COME?); and for access to the all the excavated material.

The new excavation essentially confirmed the main points in the interim report. It produced, however, two major chronological differences (*below,* Mesolithic and early RB), and a lot more archaeological detail with which we are not particularly concerned here. Stratigraphically, in the centre of the dry valley the combe floor of solid Chalk lay some 1.5 m. below the present surface, creating the need and the opportunity to explain those 1.5 metres in terms of landscape development (Pl. 7.00). It was covered with a thick, humic old land surface below and in which were evidences of both structure (post-holes) and activity (flints, pottery). This layer contained an area of Mesolithic activity (flints, almost absolutely rare in the study area) with a Neolithic/EBA horizon or horizons on or in its surface. From the Fyfod point of view, the important fact is a 'latest date' of around *c* 2000 BC for a phase which preceded the bulk of the section's (and valley

bottom's?) deposit. This was a virtually sterile and structureless, thick layer of chocolate-brown humus, as recorded in 1962 above ?EBA/?Beaker sherds (*above).* It was now seen more fully in 1995 stretching, with variations but basically as in Pl. zz, right across the width of the enclosure from ditch to ditch and outside.

It remains unclear whether this layer results from long slow accumulation or a sudden circumstances (*above*; further discussed *below* Chap. 10, p.00); but it is interpreted as the product of either or both alluvium and/or colluvium deriving from cultivation of the slopes on either side but particularly on the north (Overton Down). In itself, the layer is not securely dated, though the latest material in it were a few EBA sherds **(GILL: is this correct?)**. Overlying an EBA phase, however, completely devoid of EIA material, and sealed by early RB material, it seems likely that the layer represents a process, perhaps an event, in the 2nd millennium BC (*above* Chap 2, p.00; *below* Chap 14, p.00).

The bulk of the archaeological material came from an occupation layer apparently stretching across the combe on top of the thick humus deposit. In some places, indeed, it appeared to be on a land surface which had developed there. In the interim report, the equivalent material was identified by the excavator as similar to that from OD XII and therefore C4. Close examination of the material from the 1995 excavation highlights the almost total absence of characteristically late RB artefacts and suggests, in contrast, that it is predominantly of C1-2 AD. Most of it came from under or in the bank of the enclosure, or from the make-up of the platform on the SW side of the enclosure (fig. 7.00). There is no doubt, therefore, that the enclosure itself is of late- or post-Roman date.

A context for the C1-2 activity is provided locally by the early Roman phase of landscape organisation generally. Specific to the environs of the Down Barn enclosure is the C1-2 cultivation on Overton Down (*above*, p. 00 and Chap. 6, p.00, and *below* Chap. 12, p.00); the C2 phase underlying the C4 settlement on OD XII (*above*, p. 00); and the early RB material collected from the surface of settlement Overton Down South (*above*, p.00), of which indeed this layer in the combe may be a part.

The enclosure itself remains something of a mystery, as it has been since its discovery. The total absence of material associated with it is puzzling, as is the total absence of any material later than late RB apart from two or three medieval sherds. It might, of course, have been constructed for a use not requiring artefacts or generating discarded ones e.g. an animal fold, and could therefore be of any date later than, say, *c* AD 400. The ready availability of medieval and post-medieval artefacts, especially pottery, as

witnessed at WC and the Delling Enclosure (Chap. 5, pp. 00, 00), and their near-absence from the Down Barn enclosure, inclines interpretation towards its use in a post-Roman/pre-medieval phase, possibly one that was aceramic but more probably one in which, whatever the state of material culture, its use did not lead to the deposition and/or accumulation of rubbish. A cattle pen or sheep fold seems a likely purpose, beside a pond, on marginal land between arable and pasture, and close to an intersection in local tracks and regional routes.

The enclosure, which could well be only the visible part of a wider complex, may, however, be one of the missing medieval sheep-cotes (*below* Chap. 13, p. 00). Those "two or three stray medieval sherds", only evidenced in that published phrase, may be the slight but significant evidence indicating that here is the Overton equivalent of *Raddun* (especially triangular enclosure C, *above* Chap. 5, p.00). That site, however, produced a lot of material. Nevertheless, the Down Barn enclosure may well be a medieval sheep-cote. It may, however, have originated earlier and been abandoned, or originated earlier and lasted a long time. The Down Barn enclosure could well have originated in the Anglo-Saxon period, at a guess between the C7-9 when pottery locally was at best scarce and before the C10 charters which do not mention it. It is very near to two boundaries, and it may well have been referred to if it was relevant. An implication of the lack of post-Roman material is that, whatever the date of its use, it was disused and forgotten before the 13th century when pottery became common locally, even on Fyfield Down. This makes its absence on Overton Down, and from the Down Barn enclosure in particular, striking. Indeed, the two or three medieval sherds, perhaps indeed strays, draw attention to rather than dispute this absence on that line of argument. Even shepherds and cow-hands break the occasional jug and glass bottle out in the open, again as some of the post-medieval material at WC illustrates (*above*, p.00). Yet such evidence is completely lacking from the Down Barn enclosure, an oddity especially since the post-medieval habitation site at Down Barn itself is so near.

Interesting though the enclosure is in its own right, particularly in hinting at post-Roman elements in the landscape, the site is even more significant because of the underlying prehistoric stratigraphy to which the earthwork accidentally drew attention. The early phases, so convincingly stratified, point to the similarities with the buried evidence examined by Evans *et al.* 1993 along the main valley: this seems a downland equivalent, also with a high environmental potential whatever its chronological and cultural significance. The subsequent sequence is interpreted as illustrating large-scale and probably widespread erosion on the downs in the 2nd millennium BC (*below* Chaps. 11 and 12, pp. 00, 00), a key factor, so it is argued, in understanding this landscape. A monument-led approach can, apparently, produce bonuses.

The Delling enclosure, Fyfield Down Pls. SS, JJ; figs. 4.6).
The earthwork enclosure was discovered independently during field reconnaissance, though in fact it was published as an air photograph at about the same time (St. Joseph 19XX, ** in Geog. J.), suggesting it was a medieval or Roman farmstead. Detailed field survey showed that, like its neighbour in Wroughton Mead (fig. 4.9), it overlay early, probably prehistoric fields: the scarp dividing off its northern third is the lower edge of one such field. The enclosure was also shown to have a southern annexe. The whole looked, from experience, to be post-medieval, perhaps associated with the pillow-mound across the combe to its south (fig. 4.7). Despite its lack of a name, the enclosure was also considered as a candidate for the *Dyllinge* of the 1567 Pembroke Survey and possible precursor to the extant Delling cottage, 300 m. to the N. While this earthwork enclosure is in Lockeridge, however, the Delling cottage is in Fyfield. Its enclosing boundary spans the tithing boundary (*above* p. 00).

Delling, the existing cottage, is now the only roofed house on the downs. Clearly shown and named 'Keepers House' on Dymuck's 1819 map, it was built between 1811-1819. It lay inside a fenced or hedged enclosure, roughly rectangular in plan and shown as more or less square by Smith (1885) who called it 'Overton Delling'. This enclosure still exists as a slight bank and ditch on the ground either side of the now surfaced part of the trackway to Rockley which has been inserted since 1819. Part of the enclosure on Totterdown behind the House was recorded from the air by Major Allen (Pl. 00). The House was surrounded by an enclosed garden; another garden lay in the SW corner of the larger enclosure which appears to have been aligned on the N side of the 'old London Road', enclosed in 1815/16 (*above* p. 00).

Dating the relict earthwork enclosure by archaeological means was hardly likely to add to precision in providing a *terminus ante quem* for early fields but it nevertheless seemed that a useful purpose would be served by dating the enclosure itself, particularly if it really was post-medieval. That period was not, at the time in the early 1960s, known to be represented archaeologically on the Downs by an archaeological, *sensu* abandoned, settlement.

In fact, unknown to this writer, the enclosure had already been the subject of a small excavation in the mid-1950s by (now Colonel) A. Witheridge, then a schoolboy at Marlborough College. He thought the site might be 'Iron Age', cut two small trenches through its bank and ditch, and did no more when the three sherds he found looked to be medieval or later. It was interesting to hear his account in 1996.

A further small excavation was carried out by boys from Marlborough College under the supervision of J. Scantlebury at the suggestion of the writer. Records and master have

disappeared, and all attempts to locate either have failed. The following is based on memory, checked as far as possible on the ground early in 1996. A small cutting, of which the outline was found in 1996, was dug at the foot and towards the western end of the scarp underlying the enclosure. The exact point was in the centre of the slight depression below that scarp, opposite a platform above the scarp which appeared to be the foundations of a building. Both *c* 1960 and in February 1996, brick fragments were observed on the surface, suggesting the nature of these foundations and the post-medieval date of the structure. It was guessed that, if a building, possibly a house, had stood there, then its rubbish would have been thrown downhill into the depression. It was.

The cutting was clearly into the top of a midden or rubbish tip. It quickly produced, close under the modern turf, a quantity (a bucketful or cardboard boxful?) of quite fresh, unabraded, wheel-made sherds which this author saw once on site. They consisted memorably of quite large pieces and of yellow, internally glazed pottery with S-graffito brown decoration. There is no memory of any other material except possibly some animal bones. Clearly the assemblage was post-medieval, probably C17 and perhaps C16 (by analogy with material then being excavated from WC, cutting 10, *above* p. 00); but apparently with nothing later. The date of the enclosure seemed to have been established. Since there was no wish either to extend the excavation or involve the College in a long-term excavation commitment, the exercise was stopped and the trench was filled in.

Obviously, the sequel to the excavation is unsatisfactory and it is not a happy experience to attempt writing an excavation note, however small its canvass, from memory across a generation. If memory is correct, however, the main point of the exercise stands and very little damage has been done. The Delling enclosure would have gone into this account as post-medieval anyway, and the suggestion made that it could be the site of the documented late-C16 *Dyllinge*. Nothing in the memory of the small excavation gainsays that interpretation and, if anything, a date around AD 1600 is that more secure. The point, furthermore, is checkable, and enough material for a proper ceramic appraisal could easily be obtained; though the enclosure is now within the Scheduled area.

A SUMMARY OF OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS ON THE NORTHERN DOWNS

The Fyfod project has not, of course, exercised a monopoly of archaeological excavation in the study area; such excavations occurred before 1959 and several have taken place since. They have a major contribution to make to an understanding of the study area and of our attempt to synthesise its stories, despite (because of?) the diversity of their circumstances, objectives, results and interpretations.

Parish: West Overton **Place: Overton Hill** **Grid Ref. SU 1196 6835**
Type: Round Barrow **S.M.R. No.** **Excavated in 1962**

Barrow G6b, N of the Seven Barrow (or Overton Hill) group, consisted of a central mound 20ft in diameter surrounded by a flint and sarsen bank; together

they created a mound *c*.65ft across and at most *c* 4ft high. Centrally beneath it was a grey soil which overlay Chalk subsoil and a burial pit, covered by a turf stack; the grey soil did not occur elsewhere but a buried land surface underlay the mound. An irregular arrangements of sarsen boulders, the largest 3 ft. long, lay NW and SE, enclosed by the bank. There was no surrounding ditch. Of 12 burials in the barrow, a primary inhumation with Beaker and bronze awl dated to the C16 BC was in the central pit; 5 secondary inhumations included 3 children, and 6 cremations had been buried in containers. At the NW side a pit contained blackthorn and hazel charcoal.

Several Saxon inhumations had been cut through the barrow into the Chalk sub-soil, disturbing the Bronze Age inhumations but not the primary grave and mound. Smith and Simpson 1966

Parish: West Overton Place: Overton Hill Grid Ref. SU 118 683
Type: Roman Burials S.M.R. No. Excavated in 1962

Three small, low mounds, G6,G6a and G7, lay in a straight N-S line W of barrow G6b. The line of the Roman road from *Cunetio* to *Verlucio* runs to the South of these features in an East-West direction, and the Ridgeway runs to the West.

Site G7, the most Northerly, was found to rest on the chalk sub-soil, comprising a mound and ditch of external diameter 23ft, reaching a height of 2ft. The ditch was cut into the chalk to a depth of 1-2ft, 2ft wide. A slight bank of chalk rubble under the mound shows where the fill of the ditch was upcast. The ditch when excavated contained chalk rubble, and circular features filled with brown soil, where timber posts stood. Oak charcoal was noted in the fill. A pit was found in the centre of the mound with sherds of Roman pottery. A Saxon burial was found dug into the chalk a the North East line of the ditch (see below). The central pit was disturbed and cut by an excavation trench.

The form of G6a, similar to that of G7, had an external diameter of 15ft, reaching a height of 1ft. The ditch contained a similar fill, and remains of cremated bone and potsherds were found in the mound material. A prehistoric pit was found to the South West of the burial. Burial G6 had similar dimensions to G6a, but the fill of the ditch was uniform, a brown soil. Modern excavation had cut into the chalk sub-soil through the mound. More recently, from 1962, the site of these burials has been ploughed.

The scatter of pottery in mound 6a suggests a date for the burials up to c.A.D.225. The remains of timber post-holes in the ditches of G7 and G6a show that the burials were not intended as barrows, the timber being designed as a conspicuous monument for the cremations.

Smith and Simpson 1964, Excavation of Three Roman Tombs and a Prehistoric Pit on Overton Down, from WAM 59, pp68-85

Parish: West Overton Place: Overton Hill Grid Ref. SU 119 683
Type: Anglo-Saxon Cemetery

S.M.R. No. Excavated in 1962

Anglo-Saxon inhumations were discovered when barrow 6b and the Roman burials on Overton Hill were excavated. Four Saxon graves were found in G6b, and one on the edge of G7(see above). All five were cut into the chalk sub-soil. At G6b, the burial of a woman and a male warrior of rank were found, also two child inhumations. A child inhumation was found at G7.

Remains of a shield, the lug from a bronze cauldron and spearheads found in the burials have been used to date the cemetery. Grave 1 contained a shield boss, the form of which suggested a burial of the 6th century A.D. An iron finger ring suggested a 5th to 6th century date, whilst spearheads were recognised as typical of 6th century forms. A number of early Anglo-Saxon sites are related to the vicinity of the cemetery, at Avebury and East Kennett. They relate to battles recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, at Barbury Castle 10km to the North of Overton Hill, fought in A.D.556 and A.D.592, also at Wodnesbeorg, 5km South of Overton Hill, in A.D.715. The cemetery also lies in the North part of the tithing of West Overton, recorded in 10th century charters.

Eagles 1986, Pagan Anglo-Saxon Burials at West Overton, from WAM 80, pp103-119

Parish: West Overton Place: North Farm Grid Ref. SU 1386 6861 Type: Round Barrow

S.M.R. No. Excavated in 1987

This barrow is one of an extensive group of ploughed out barrows and ring ditches North of the river Kennet. Earliest activity on the site seems to be late Neolithic in date, when the dismembered and incomplete body of a male was deposited in a pit. An early Beaker body was then deposited, crouched with the head pointing East. A few pottery fragments were found related to this burial. These burials were then covered by a barrow, surrounded by a ditch. The site shows signs of ploughing above this, and the remains of another turf-line.

An early Bronze Age adolescent burial was placed in the mound, with amber and jet beads, and around the same period, the body of a young infant. A larger mound was raised over them, with a deeper ditch. From the middle Bronze Age, an urn survived on the North side of the barrow, and from the late Bronze Age a cremation cemetery was placed in the South ditch. Two free-standing stones are placed to the South West of the barrow, perhaps marking the cremation cemetery. A Roman lynchet runs across the site at North Farm, showing that agricultural activity has occurred around the barrow over a long chronological period.

Swanton and Evans 1988, Interim in Excavation and Fieldwork in Wiltshire, from WAM 82, pp181-1

Parish: Avebury Place: Overton Hill Grid Ref. SU 118 679 Type: Stone Circle

S.M.R. No. Excavated in 1931;1971

Sanctuary Hill stone circle comprised a double concentric ring of stones, until it was destroyed in 1724. The outer stone circle had a diameter of c.30m, and the inner a diameter of c.10m. Occupation of the site before the late Neolithic is accounted for by finds of c.50 sherds of Peterborough ware pottery, early Neolithic in date. Two phases of construction for the monument are broadly recognised. Originally, a timber structure was built, dug into post-holes for settings. A monument of stones set in concentric rings replaced the original wooden structure. Sherds of grooved ware pottery occur in primary contexts on the site.

A burial of a juvenile, crouched, together with a B.W. beaker was found in a grave adjacent to to stone hole C12, placed chronologically after the stone settings. From the pottery found at Sanctuary Hill, a date for the construction of the monument has been put forward for c.2500B.C. It bears many similarities to henge monuments in the vicinity such as Woodhenge, or site IV, Mount

Pleasant. If this date is correct, then its construction was contemporary with a period of intensive building in the Avebury area. Distribution of finds on the site, particularly flint and ceramics show a higher frequency within the circle at the East side.

Pollard, J 1992, The Sanctuary, Overton Hill, Wiltshire: A Re-examination, from PPS 58, pp213-226

The site of the Experimental Earthwork (Pls. ££, $$; figs. 6.1)

Excavation here was not part of the Fyfod project nor was it carried out to address questions about the local landscape. Nevertheless, the earthwork lies within the field archaeology of Overton Down where it 'is sited near the edge of successive arable fields ['Celtic' and medieval] which, though separated in time by a millennium, ended along approximately the same ill-defined line.' (Fowler 1963, 64-66).

Preparation of the ground for the construction of the earthwork in 1960 involved stripping down to the surface of the Upper Chalk. On five subsequent occasions (1962,1964, 1968, 1976 and 1992) a proper archaeological excavation of the earthwork has been conducted (Jewell 1963, Bell *et al.* 1996). No archaeological features were visible on the site before work began, however, and none have so far been found during the excavations. A small amount of archaeological material has nevertheless been recorded, the potsherds being exclusively BA, LBA, EIA and RB (Jewell 1963, Dimbleby and Jewell 1966, Bell *et al.* 1996).

Two natural subsoil features, like others excavated on both Overton and Fyfield Downs, were interpreted as tree-holes and therefore likely to be among the earliest items in the landscape discussed in this report (*below* p. 00, *above* p. 00; Bell *et al.* 1996, 76-77, 140). They almost certainly belonged to a woodland phase before the downs were significantly cleared of tree-cover. They predated all other structures and are earlier than human activity, judging by the absence of the otherwise apparently ubiquitous flint flakes from their fillings. Overall, however, the ground disturbance involved in constructing and monitoring the experimental earthwork has resulted in virtually no archaeological damage, a gratifying result given the care with which the precise site was chosen. The excavations suggest a low level of non-occupational activity on the spot the earthwork occupies. The artefacts recorded incidentally in conducting the experiment can be best explained by infrequent, or largely non-domestic, manuring of a lightly-used, perhaps locally marginal, area in late prehistoric and Roman times - in effect an interpretation similar to that initially suggested (Fowler 1963, 64-66). Its location indeed seems to lie between structural remains of field systems, possibly retained as a patch of pasture in the increasingly organised landscapes from the 2nd millennium BC onwards.

Parish: Preshute Place: Manton Down Grid Ref. SU 28 NE
Type: Medieval mound

S.M.R. No. Excavated in 1949

Several sherds of medieval pottery were noted on a mound near 'the Beeches' wood on Manton Down. Excavation uncovered a substantial layer of clay with flints with a protruding sarsen, overlaid by dark earth with red patches. No signs of structural remains were evident. The mound is 23ft in diameter, with a thickness of dark earth of 2-3ft. A large number of medieval potsherds were discovered, also a whetstone, nails and other ironwork, which suggested a 13th century date for the mound.

Meyrick, O 1950, An Early Medieval Site on Manton Down, from WAM 53, June, pp328-331

Parish: West Overton Place: Overton Down Grid Ref. ?
Type: Round Barrow

S.M.R. No. Excavated in 1960

A small round barrow excavated for the Ministry of Works. The primary burial comprised a cinerary urn in the centre of the mound, and sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the ditch fill.

Birmingham, J 1960, Overton Down, Wiltshire in Notes on Excavations, from PPS 26-27,p346

Manton long barrow: SU14787135
A long mound oriented ESE/WNW c 25 m long was ploughed over in 1952 and excavated by RJCA in 1955 by RJCA. In the barrow interior, an oxskull and sherds of Neo. (WH) pottery were discovered. Sarsens at the entrance, and underlying depressions which were probably natural, did not resolve the question of an entrance structure.

Temple Bottom long barrow, Ogbourne St. Andrew SU14867251.
Excavated 1861. Described by Harrod as a low mound of earth 47 ft in diam overlain by sarsen stones (1864). Three artefacts were uncovered, a bone gouge (?primary burial?), calcined bones (intrusive secondary?), and fragments of coarse pottery.

West Woods long barrow, West Overton. SU 15696563.
Excavated 1880. A mound 38m long, 30 m wide and at most 3.3 m high, with well-defined ditches, the whole oriented E-W. Resting on the Chalk subsoil were a cairn of small sarsen stones over a 'dolmen' of 4 central stones containing 'black matter' but no relics.

Appendix

Other excavations in the Study area but off the northern Downs

Parish: West Overton Place: North Farm Grid Ref. SU 135 684
Type: soil profiles Excavated in 1983-4

Trenches were opened as part of a project to test the soil profiles of the Upper Kennet valley. Different soil profiles were noted. Earliest deposits were of tufa gravel , overlain by tufa and silt loam, which in cutting DN was found to contain struck flint and bones of Cervus Elaphus. This was overlain by a dark humic layer, then alluvial silt. The tusk of a wild boar found in cutting DN in the dark loam produced a Radiocarbon date of c. 8260 B.P. Structural features were noted in a number of trenches. In the Avebury soils of cutting DF, a cremation pit was uncovered containing a pot, dated to 3000 B.P. In cutting DN a lynchet complex was noted in the Avebury soil, and in cutting C, two lines of sarsen stones were found resting in a calcite loam above the Avebury soils.

Using molluscan remains in the soil samples, archaeological evidence and thermoluminescence dating of some sediments, environmental changes for the vicinity of West Overton were noted. Finds in the soils below the Avebury horizon showed signs of forest clearance, and layers of alluvial deposits. The formation of the Avebury soil seems to be linked to the late Neolithic, with no sign of cultivation. The later soils, and the evidence of lynchets on the Avebury soil, have linked the later horizons with the Beaker period, showing signs of cultivation and build-up of alluvial deposits.
On the ground surface, earthworks can still be discerned, interpreted as medieval or post-medieval water meadows.

Evans, Limbrey, Mate and Mount 1993, An Environmental History of the Upper Kennet Valley, Wiltshire, for the Last 10,000 Years, from PPS 59, pp139-196

Parish: West Overton Place: West Overton Grid Ref. SU 1340 6822
Type: Round Barrow

S.M.R. Excavated in 1993

The Pound Field Barrow was recognised on aerial photographs and was excavated before the laying of a pipeline. It is 100m North East of St. Michael's church, West Overton. The external diameter of the feature is 33.5m. A ditch was cut into the sub-soil, 5.5m wide, 1.2m deep. It was found filled with brown, silty clay. A greyish brown layer of silty clay was found to lie on the sub-soil of the barrow interior, containing a flint blade and charcoal. Chalk rubble then covered this layer. The charcoal was from oak and hazel, and the find suggests a lightly wooded area in the barrow's vicinity at the time of construction. Potsherds were found in the fill of the ring ditch, of either Iron Age or early Anglo-Saxon origin. Two small finds have been discovered in the vicinity of West Overton; a flint arrowhead (C2) at SU 115 677, and a bronze chisel and axe (C3), found at SU 1200 6750. From geomagnetic survey, an anomaly was noted close to the barrow in Pound Field (D1).

Parish: Alton and Savernake Place: Red Shore and New Buildings

Grid Ref. SU 117 648 and SU 193 665 Type: Wansdyke bank and ditch boundary S.M.R. No.

Excavated from 1966 to 1970

Excavations through the bank and ditch at Red Shore and the bank at New Buildings showed marked differences in structure of the dyke, also differences in the pollen evidence from each site.
At Red Shore, a number of celtic field lynchets run under the bank of the dyke. The bank itself is at this point c.9.5m wide, and 2m high. It comprises of dump construction from ditch material, mainly clay with flints, and a mull layer from deposited turves where the ditch was cut, high up in the bank stratigraphy. The ditch was v-shaped, with the original bottom at a depth of 3.90m. A number of layers of silt deposition and flint nodules had built up in the ditch.

The smaller trench at New Buildings, cut partially through the bank, showed a different stratigraphy comprising redeposited top-soil, red clay and black layers. Differences between the two areas are highlighted by the pollen evidence. At Red Shore, high profiles of grasses, bracken and plantain suggest use of the area for pasture at the time of the dyke's construction. At New Buildings, signs of hazel, oak, grasses and ribwort plantain, also fern in higher deposits, show the long-established nature of Savernake Forest, also the lack of any real quantity of pasture vegetation.

The date of construction for the Wansdyke is ambiguous from archaeological evidence. Sherds of Samian pottery recovered from the bank material, also a penanular brooch found in the excavation suggest post-Roman construction. Dates have been suggested of A.D.450 to 500 or A.D.550 to 600.

Green, H.S. 1971, Wansdyke, Excavations 1966 to 1970, from WAM 66, pp129-146

Parish: West Overton Place: West Overton Grid Ref. SU 1345 6820
Type: Strip Lynchets

S.M.R. No. Excavated in 1993

These lynchets straddled the North West section of the barrow ditch. A shallow terrace was uncovered containing a high proportion of chalk rubble, and a dark yellow silty loam, overlaying the rubble. A number of medieval features are of note in the vicinity; medieval earthworks at West Overton (D4, SU 1340 6810) and to the West, earthworks at East Kennet Manor (C6, SU 117 675) a Saxon loom weight (C5) and an iron key (C7, SU 115 677). Magnetic anomalies were noted close to the East Kennet earthworks, and a blacksmith's garden is recorded to the West of the strip lynchets, close to rig and furrow earthworks.

Powell et al. 1993, Archaeology in the Avebury Area, Wiltshire. Wessex Archaeology.

Shaw DMV; Church: SU 139 653.
Excavated 1929. Visible as a low, grass-covered mound, then and still, the remains of the church were only partly examined in what was clearly, not least from the silent witness of the published photographs, a small-scale and technically-limited excavation by masters and boys from Marlborough School. The site is on Clay-with-Flints. Internally 33 ft x 16 ft., with no chancel, the nave survived in outline defined by flint walls still standing 2-3 ft. high in places with some sarsen coins and facing stones still in place at key points (fig. 9.00). Inner wall footings had been laid in a trench; outer footings apparently just rested on soil. The floor comprised flints rammed into the Clay, covered with beaten chalk; but no flagging was found. The base of a slightly off-centre altar, 4 ft x 2 ft, lay against the E wall. A doorway in the N wall was 2 ft. wide; a dripstone on the southern interior suggested a S door. On the S too were found a complete stone window surround and the parts of a complete hood for half a window. The whole was covered by flint rubble, presumably the non-organic part of walls once 3-4 m. high and originally held in a matrix of 'clunch' or weak lime mortar.

Indeed, perhaps much more suggestively than the excavator realised, the evidence exposed seems to represent the debris resulting from a deliberate robbing and ruination of the church. The absence of a floor (flag-stones?) and most architectural fittings, plus the state of the walls, are strongly indicative. And in its way, the fact that some fragments were found, all broken except for the remarkable window, re-inforces this interpretation: they were what the demolition men knowingly left behind because they were no use for the repair or new building work to which the materials were being taken. The excavator's starting point was a local story that Shaw church had been removed and rebuilt at one of the Altons in the Vale of Pewsey below.

No coins were found but 'A number of sherds of the familiar medieval green glaze turned up, particularly outside the west wall.' These sound as if they were of one of the types discussed at Wroughton Mead in Chap. 5 (*above*, p. 00), suggesting a C13 date, though Fabric 00 continues into the early C14. The architectural pieces recovered on the site indicate a date in the early C14 for the construction of the church. A blackgammon board on a broken slab from the altar was, one hopes, scratched by the demolishers rather than the builders but has not been closely dated. The ambiguities of the documentary evidence are such, concluded the excavator himself, that that source cannot clarify the issue of date. We would therefore propose that, until proved otherwise, Shaw church is interpreted as having been founded in the later C13 and demolished between one and two centuries later, perhaps in the early C15.

Brentnall H.C., 'The church of Shaw-in-Alton', *WAM* 45, 1930, 156-65
Clark Maxwell, W.G. 'Blackgammon board scratched on a slab from Shaw-in-Alton church', *WAM* 45, 1931, 488-89