

FYFOD LECTURE Soc of Ants. Thurs. 27 Nov. 97

(I read the introduction, then adlibbed the rest in relation to the illustrations)

INTRODUCTION

As I was saying, Mr President, when I presented a first interim report on this project to our Society on 30 November, 1967, at least we had made a start. That was after 9 years of sporadic, partly RCHM but largely spare-time fieldwork, and 8 seasons of excavation, partly weekends, partly month-long periods, under the auspices of Bristol University Extra-Mural Department and including, I am happy to re-acknowledge, three grants from this Society.

Since then, post-excavation work dominated the 1970s with small-scale fieldwork continuing then and sporadically through the 1980s on our project, while Professor John Evans and others pursued their studies of the same area but with different emphases. The need to prepare for and then execute the 32nd year section through the Overton Down earthwork in 1992, and then publish the first three decades of work of that project, galvanised reconsideration of its context over the whole area. Consequently, I having been working more or less full-time on this Project for the last three years and, with very considerable help from others largely funded by English Heritage, have produced an increasingly well-ordered and accessible archive, this hefty draft volume currently being revised for publication in this Society's Research Report Series, some interesting ideas with English Heritage for electronic availability of much of the data, some spin-off papers, and an avowedly popular book the publisher of which is sitting nervously with us this evening.

It may just have occurred to you by now that maybe I've brought the wrong illustrations; O ye of little faith! Less than an hour from now you will have come to appreciate that the Duke of Marlborough's place and sheep have in common the salient fact that both are central to an understanding of the landscape of Fyfield and Overton.

I genuinely thought thirty years ago that we had gone a long way towards sorting out archaeologically and historically at least Fyfield and Overton Downs. But, as I now know, thirty years on, I got it wrong.....and maybe there is a message in that admission alone. Why I and others misinterpreted the evidence then existing could make quite an interesting study in itself, though not tonight. Nevertheless, I cannot but note that after 10 years I remarked that to spend so long on one place denoted either obstinacy or incompetence while our Fellow and my colleague, Christopher Taylor, remarked of one of his long-term studies that after 20 years his understanding had disintegrated into total confusion. I can now tell him why: he did not go on long enough. All is now totally clear to me at Fyfield and Overton after 38 years, disconcertingly so to the extent that I know such confidence can only have arisen from over-familiarity. Nevertheless, he who would bungee-jump has to be confident of something so I am seizing the opportunity tonight, not to wade through mountains of data or even to give a chronological story of these two parishes, but to bounce around this landscape selectively, judiciously seeking some local points of potentially wider significance. I do so to test ideas, seeking your reactions to some

interpretative thoughts arising from the doubtless overlong contemplation of an area of land which is not in itself particularly important but may be of some significance because it is typical.

After briefly introducing the area, already well known to many in this room, and summarising our methodology, I shall pick out a few issues under each of seven themes: monuments to the dead; exploitation; land arrangements; settlement; boundaries and territories; communications; and ending with a brief word on conservation. All these themes are of course interconnected, especially here where locally for decades, aided and abetted by hundreds of people, I have been trying to answer the basic question: "How did this land come by its present appearance?" Part of the answer lies in the ambivalence that here, in central southern England, far from the Celtic cliffs of Cornwall or the remotenesses of Snowdonian Wales, here in the soft Wessex countryside of Kings Ine and Alfred and of the great landed estates of the English, the landscape we see today is, in anthropogenic terms, essentially British rather than English. The British made it; the English re-arranged some furniture.

The critical points in that process which has given us what we now see were c 4000 BC, 2000 BC, 800 BC, 300 AD, 650 AD, 1820 AD and 1970 AD.

Illustrations

Overheads

Slides

1. INTRO.

Blenheim

Sheep

Location map

Map: Marlborough Downs

Vale of Pewsey scarp

Geology and topography: maps and profile

Sarsens: Valley of Stones

1811 map

Woods

AP: Lockeridge and woods

OS map: Fyfield and Overton

AP: Manton Down

Down Barn area

Map: the parishes

Totterdown to S.

2. METHODOLOGY

Allen OAP

ALLEN OAP

RESISTIVITY SURVEYING

EXCAVATION (SEPIA)

Expt. Earthwork

Model: intensity of investigation

Reality: ditto

3. BARROWS IN THE LANDSCAPE

Distrib. map: long barrows

Beaker cemetery plan

Round barrow group distribution

Beaker burial

Beaker

Overton Hill (Gp. H.)

Overton church

4. EXPLOITATION

Winchester cathedral

Wilton House

Wansdyke (OS map)

Polissoir

Sarsen quern stone

splitting sarsen

North Farm: gentleman farmer

Watermeadows

5. LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Fig. 96: Gingell's map

RCHM map

PJF map: analysis

AP Manton Down

Map: Manton Down

Ditch section

OAP: Totterdown

Fyfield lynchet: cuttings

: sections

FL: gen. View

: excavation

OD XI: lynchet

: postholes

Ridge and furrow and tithing boundaries

West Overton 3 open fields: strips

furlongs and fields

OAP Fyfield Down

Wood management 1780-1820

6. SETTLEMENT

OD XI: plan and excavations

: buildings

: enclosed settlement

: 13th century

: LBA pot

OAP Fyfield and Overton Down from NE

Buildings 2/3

OD South plan

OD XII: excavation plan

Down Barn area from SE

VAP OD south

: Building 2 plan and finds
 : 4
 : 4: phase plans
 : glass
 OD central: settlement and enclosure
 Rodden Mead and Fyfield Down
 Rodden Mead
 WC plan
 cutting plan
 Building 4 plan
 1
 4 phase plan
 VAP Crawford complex
 Map ditto
 Phases ditto
 Valley c 1800
 VAP West Overton
 VAP East Overton
 Map Overton
 Overlay Overton
 Elevation E. Overton manor house
 Plan: Shaw
 Map: 10th century landscape
 Map: the Lockeridges
 Overlay Lockeridges
 Map Fyfield 1811
 Map Fyfield OS 1882
 Ditto overlay

Building 3
 Down Barn Enclosure

Oven
 Buildings 2 and 3

Manor House

7. BOUNDARIES AND TERRITORIES

Lockeridge Down ditch
 Map: South of study area
 DJB map of manors
 Maps of CF's and manor boundaries
 Model: territories, boundaries and subdivisions

Long Tom
 Henry Meux stone
 Fyfield Down stone

8. COMMUNICATIONS

VAP: Boreham area
 Map: old tracks and nodal points

OAP south over Fyfield Down

Map: droves and tithings

The model: the formation of tithings

Map of the Marlborough Downs

9. CONSERVATION

Map: proposed WH boundary

WH map, Avebury

Shears: **CUT**

LOCATION

East of Avebury

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METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork: reconnaissance

survey

resistivity

AP

maps

documentary evidence

excavation: slit

set-piece and open of 3 settlements

LINK:

Now to themes:

Change as a theme self-evident so not going to deal with it separately; though am concerned with the dynamics, the motors, of change, and can say now they seem in this case to be more to do with tenure and technology rather than economics and environment. Similarly continuity: if there wasn't continuity I would not be giving this lecture.

BARROWS

Christianity critical in settlement pattern and tenurial framework but will pick that up later; had some medieval mumbo jumbo from WC and also plenty of evidence from ODXI of structured pit depositions but the significant aspect in landscape terms is the

Early Neo: long barrows

Round barrow distribution

The two types of monuments indicate two of the very rare times where local resources were being reinvested in the locality, a local use of surplus energy represented in both cases by monuments.

EXPLOITATION

E/MBA one of few times when product of local farming and its surplus was being re-cycled into this landscape. Can pick out other times when this was happening because monuments were built and have survived:

(Mid and L Neo = Avebury sacred landscape include the nearby W. Kennet enclosures and The Sanctuary. Nothing similar in Fyfod)

(LBA/VEIA: nothing monumental. Archaeologically nothing happening = pasture, ranching, with intercommoning related to 4 hillforts to N, SE, SW and W.)

(Roman: the road symbolises the going through and taking out mentality of the times, though some things were coming in; but no monuments)

C5- Wansdyke: does this mean, according to this hypothesis, that there was somebody with authority to concentrate local energies, however briefly?

(C7- 1800: a landscape of exploitation as peasants worked and estates were run to supply Winchester and Wilton, and in a small way the Templars, and then Marlborough and Pembroke families)

CHANGE c 1800 with Enclosure which brought in large tenant and new landowner men who re-invested in their own land, with less going out in rent. Marked archaeologically by new gentry houses watermeadows: AS in C10??? Certainly two mills

1821 Act

LANDSCAPE ORGANISATION

DOWNLAND

BA fields: chronology and axes

Roman fields etc.

Medieval r and f respects Tithing boundaries (o/h)

VALLEY: West Overton three fields: cf CFs at furlong level?

WOODLAND:

Continual management of basically the same area

SETTLEMENT

Downland Excavations: OD XI
OD XII
WC

Two general points: all basically the same, indicating what the area can carry and needs i.e. similar lifestyle and standard of living, but each with its own oddities

: 3-generation model of occupation c 100 years

Valley settlements: the general point is that they all share basic patterns of shift, slip and fragment and co-alescence, yet each is different, morphologically and tenurially. What are the implications of such diversity for the thousands of villages in England?

Fyfield: villa, manor house, and church
 always small and always on the move - in anticlockwise circle
 the Overtons: Saxon Overtons and the churches
 St Michael's and the barrow
 Lockeridge - 5 inc. two poss. Saxon settlements
 Templar settlement, possy. Planned
 Upper Lockeridge which lasted c 1170-1260
 the mid C19 Meux Estate village

Woodland settlements: Upper Lockeridge; and Boreham?
 Shaw

BOUNDARIES

Have been fixed for at least 1100 years for certain: TWO AS charters 939 and 972, clearly boundaries already old. Refs. to arable features like lynchet are to CFs, not contemporary arable except where is to live cultivation as 'headlands'
 CFs respect boundaries on Boreham Down

Characteristically seem to pick up the story, archaeologically and documentarily, at moments of fragmentation: e.g. three 1st mill. BC enclosures are subdivided; the C10 and C11 and C12 evidence all indicate that something larger preceded what we are looking at i.e. the AS charters hint at a unit perhaps the original Overton, split into Overton and Fyfield and then two Overtons and then a Lockeridge and then a subdivided East Overton (South Overton) and Lockeridge (Upper Lockeridge)

Long barrow territories

Iron Age territories

Two Roman estates, essentially Fyfield and Overton (check spacing of Fyfield Villa-ton, Headlands RB town and Silbury Hill large settlement)

COMMUNICATIONS

Droeways

Transhumance

Pattern of ways and parish shapes

CONSERVATION

WH Site boundaries