

## Chapter 10 From the Kennet to the Southern Woods: Lockeridge to Shaw

8: **Lockeridge Dene**: shrunken settlement, formerly a 'green' village on main E-W 'market' route, mainly 'old' houses & gardens with NT preserved area of sarsens on coombe floor (NB for Chap. 12), with long barrow, round barrows and ?RB enclosure immediately above in 'old' arable (1995 AP discoveries: New 1995 lb to go in here with map ref to White Barrow Field i.e. this has been permanent arable for at least 200 years; ?long barrow, Lockeridge SU 14936779 (W. Overton ph., G. 24), Barker 1984, 23. Summarise his short a/c - not v. convincing. Should it be in this land-use or is it in 'old arable?' - CHECK its exact position

10: **West Woods** (fig. 3.00; Pls. 3.00, 3.00): a small area as an example of permanent woodland (the western end of Savernake Forest: the name has no point otherwise) represented by a field archaeology of earthworks from abandoned planting enclosures and with good documentation for woodland management and settlement colonisation

West Woods long barrow, Barker 1984, 10: summarise his a/c

**Shaw is 1000 wds @ 22/2/96** (new info. from DJBonney to be added 1.vii.96.)

**Shaw** is an ancient unit of land with a name originally appropriate to its topographical position (Bonney 1976, fig. 7.7, shows it as a manor within the ecclesiastical parish of W. Overton; *PNWilts*, 307: **sceaga**, 'wood, copse'). It is now within West Overton parish but Shaw Copse and part of the area of our 'window' is in Alton parish. This current partition is in accord with ambiguities in the historical record and interpretations of it (VCH II, 150*n*, 201). Behind the uncertainties, however, Shaw exhibits what seems to be a long history of existence in a local boundary zone, topographically, geologically, economically, tenurially and perhaps politically. Probably significantly in view of its distinctive history, the area lies on the edge of historically permanent woodland with, now, glades of old pasture and clearly ancient hedge-lines, one of which is an Anglo-Saxon Charter boundary (see Chap 8). The unit's one existing settlement is Shaw House, lying on a slight peninsula from the main plateau immediately to the E between the 725-50 ft. contours, close beside Wansdyke.

This small 'window' (fig. 3.^), at the extreme SW corner of the study area, was chosen primarily to demonstrate the range of geology, soils and resources available in the locality by illustrating an area high on a Clay-with-Flints capping right on the edge of permanent woodland. Superficially, in topographical and

other respects, it is very different from the open downland pasture only 4 km. to its N (and indeed along the Pewsey escarpment only 2 km. to its S), yet historically and, to an extent, archaeologically, it can be seen in its local context as a southern equivalent to *Raddun* (Chap. 7). Like *Raddun*, hereabouts is a place of long-lived activity; but, unlike *Raddun*, Shaw is occupied today, though that does not 'prove' continuous settlement. In XXXX, a village here was recorded as 'abandoned' (or is the word 'deserted'? - find the original ref. - in WAM, Bonney or Beresford?).

The core of the 'window' archaeologically is indeed a deserted medieval village of which the main earthworks are in a good state of preservation (Beresford and Hurst 1971, 166). The village has not, however, been the subject of proper field survey, and fig. 3.00 is a copy of the best available representation (*after* JJJJJJ). The site of the church, which remains prominent as an earthwork inside a small enclosure, presumably the graveyard, was trenched in 1929, one of only three recorded archaeological excavations of a medieval church site in England before 1939 (Brentnall 1929; Beresford and Hurst 1971, 82). The most prominent earthwork, however, is a length of East Wansdyke, impressive S and SW of Shaw House but interestingly slight and even apparently almost flattened N of and close to the medieval village. The Dyke itself clearly indicates that, at least for a time in the C5-6, Shaw was 'frontier country'; that it was also in a boundary zone at another time or times, perhaps before and almost certainly later than Wansdyke, is further suggested by the pattern of, largely ancient, parish boundaries here. Basically they ignore Wansdyke but jostle for space with each other, giving the impression that the area is at the further limits of economic rather than political units. It is certainly central to Bonney's (1972, 174-6) argument that an organised landscape, eventually represented by parish boundaries, existed before Wansdyke was constructed.

Immediately N of the site of the church, between it and the parish boundary with W. Overton ph. to the N and the NW corner of Shaw Wood to the E (SU 139652), an area of new arable had (in 1995) recently ploughed over earthworks (presumably of the northern part of the DMV). Indications in the topsoil suggested occupation. A rapid superficial search along the S and E edges of the field produced a scatter of obviously post-medieval material e.g. brick and bottle glass fragments (discarded), a few sherds of coarse pottery (assumed to be medieval) and some flints. Four of the five sherds proved to be of Neolithic type; the other was RB or later. The 11 flints were all also Neolithic types, except two small broken blades which could be of Mesolithic type. Three different types of flint - dark grey, pale grey and creamy white, - were represented among the tools, respectively (in addition to the 2 micro-blades) 3 borers/awls, 3 scrapers, 2 points, and a snapped blade of pale grey flint, triangular in section and probably c 8 cms long originally (all now in DM).

This material clearly hints at a phase of activity, probably occupation, somewhat earlier than hitherto imagined in the long story of Shaw. Neolithic activity is not,

however, implausible, despite perception of it in the Avebury area as having been largely on the downs and along the Kennet valley. Shaw, despite its marginality to such places then as more recently, nevertheless offers resources characteristic of an interfacial zone, here along a woodland margin, to counterbalance its obvious disadvantages of altitude and clay soil. It would surely have been part of an obvious hunting zone at the very least for people coming and going at Knap Hill, only 2 km. SW. It may too have been more central to Neolithic communities in the area. A long barrow lies only 2 km. E in woodland close to findspots of other Neolithic material both to its SE (VCH I, i, 120) and W (*WAM* 61, 1966, 98, from which all the following quotes are taken). The latter, only 1.5 km. E of the Shaw finds, 'hints that this area, just within the clay-with-flints belt, may well have been free of trees at least temporarily during this period'. Collectively, the evidence suggests at the very least a phase or phases of Neolithic activity involving occupation, burial, probably hunting and collecting, and possibly even tree-clearance and farming, along the edges of permanent woodland.

The recognition of RB pottery, probably 'mainly first century A.D. in date', with the latter Neolithic material is locally of considerable interest. It was found in an area, freshly-ploughed, of 'patches of soil containing burnt matter', some with chips of sarsen, 'markedly affected by heating, and the occasional fragment of bone.' The conclusion that these patches 'are the result of tree and scrub clearance' is uncontentious but that such work was 'in Roman or later times' seems unproven. Such clearance could have been earlier too, and indeed the evidence may hint at a repetitive practice. Nevertheless, whenever else clearance may have occurred, the hint that land clearance may have been carried out in the (by implication, second half of) the 1st century AD fits in very well with an interpretation, independently witnessed on the Downs, arguing for a locally widespread phase of landscape re-organisation and exploitation c 100 AD (Chaps. 4 and 10).