

CHAPTER 1

A LANDSCAPE AND ITS INVESTIGATION, 1959-96

INTRODUCTION

Topography

The area studied encompasses the parishes of Fyfield and (now West) Overton, lying immediately east of Avebury and some seven kilometres west of Marlborough in Wiltshire. Their boundaries stretch from a common north point high on the Marlborough Downs for some 5km south to the western edges of Savernake forest. They contain, on Fyfield and Overton Downs, one of the largest remaining tracts of chalk grassland in southern England (fig £\$).

The local topography is on the dip-slope of the Marlborough Downs, cut through by the upper reaches of the east-flowing River Kennet. The scenery is dominated by the high (Upper) chalk which rises from the north side of the Kennet Valley to the high Downland in the north; and similarly to the south, though much of the higher ground is wooded and immediately beyond it is the scarp-face dropping steeply into the trench of the Vale of Pewsey. Both sides of the Kennet valley are broken by a number of dry valleys, markedly so on the north where Clatford Bottom and Pickledean (*OE Pytteldene*) run south-east to north-west far into the almost treeless downland facing the daily arc of the sun. In contrast, their counterparts to the south reach through north-facing slopes towards the remnants of Savernake Forest. The changing form of the landscape is directly reflected in contrasting archaeologies. The long, narrow nature of the parishes has ensured that all of the locally available varieties of resources have been included in the exploitation strategies both of the past and, however briefly, in this study.

The Marlborough Downs, of which Fyfield and Overton are a part, is an area c. 50 km² bordered to the south by the Kennet, the east by the river Og, and to the north and west by prominent escarpments. The slopes are shallow and convex rising to heights of just under 900 ft (275 m) above sea level. The underlying geology is a combination of Upper and Lower Chalk capped by rendzina soils and in places, Clay-with-Flints. The valleys are a more complex mix of colluvial, alluvial and undisturbed deposits often preserving beneath them a wealth of unexplored archaeology (Allen 19??, Evans *et al.* 1993). Through and above the main deposits lies a spread of broken sarsen stone, a material (though not necessarily individual stones from here) famous for its incorporation within the monuments at Stonehenge

and Avebury. The sarsens are the result of the breaking up of a much earlier (Tertiary) sandy crust which lay above the surviving land mass. The result was the deposition of the silcrete boulders across the reformed landscape.

The extent of this cover has been reduced drastically by local use of the stone for building material, not continuously but continually from at least the 4th millennium BC until early this century (King 1968). Some areas still contain concentrations of sarsens, most notably in Clatford Bottom/Stoney Valley (Pl. 00) at the core of the Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve. The best of all survivals is a small area of densely close, and often large, sarsens in and on the north side of Delling Wood as the dry valley begins to run out between the north end of Overton Down and Totterdown (fig. 1.00). There, one can still enjoy the once-common experience, recorded by Aubrey originally (??????), of walking across the landscape without touching the ground; and the scrub vegetation and looming stones on a foggy day can together offer a certain eeriness suggestive, doubtless spuriously, of an uncleared landscape long ago.

Two National Trust properties were acquired locally 'for the benefit of the nation' precisely because of the stones' survival. One is at the south end of Piggledean, the other is south of the Kennet in Lockeridge Dene. Other good sarsen 'trains' still exist further south in West Woods and it is possible to imagine the landscape, prior to clearance, being strewn with large stones. It is also possible to imagine in various places individual stones actually being used e.g. pp. 00, 00, 00.

The effect of time upon this geology has evolved a number of distinct landscape zones. These include the high plateau areas, asymmetrical valleys with dry, relatively flat bottoms, and broad valley floors. The overall visual effect is of a flowing, 'easy' landscape which nevertheless peaks in relatively harsh, marginal uplands.

The present landscape is visually dominated by openness - vast skies and large expanses of arable fields apparently devoid of boundaries and distinguishing marks. The occasional round barrow can be distinguished as a skyline hump or a small island of trees within this sea of arable. The core of the study area on the Downs, hidden away from the passer-through and off-limits to vehicles, is in stark contrast to this. The archaeology is visibly preserved on chalk grassland, disturbed only by the grazing of sheep and rabbits, and the thunder of racehorse hooves training on courses which cut across the slopes. Here the landscape shows up the lynchets, banks, ditches, tracks, and settlement enclosures which make up the remains of past

human action. Trees still exist in small pockets of woodland and along a few old hedgerows, but they stand out because of their relative scarcity in an open landscape. Southwards and across the Kennet, woodland is dominant in the equivalent zone in the landscape (Pl. 00). Modern commercial softwoods march with older deciduous plantations in a mosaic further enhanced by clearings documented since early medieval times and doubtless sometimes of earlier date. Some woodland is a recolonisation of such clearings, even former arable (p. 00), with diversity in land-use as well as land-history being maintained by another marked contrast. Permanent arable reaches up to the woods from Lockeridge and Overton villages while, adjacent and away to the south west just beyond the parish boundary, is botanically-rich old grassland (also a National Nature Reserve) on and around the peaks of Golden Ball Hill, Knap Hill with its causewayed enclosure, and Walker's Hill with Adam's Grave long barrow.

Research Background: a summary

Research into the archaeology of the Marlborough Downs has been dominated by the position of Avebury at their western foot. Few involved with that great monument have, however, lifted their eyes to the hills to the east - Avebury, Overton and Fyfield Downs, - though many have of course looked south to Overton Hill and 'The Sanctuary', West Kennet long barrow and Silbury Hill, west to Avebury Trusloe, South Street and the Beckhampton 'Avenue', and north to Windmill Hill (Burl 1979, Crawford and Keiller 1928, Cunliffe 1931, Evans 1993, Piggott 1963, Pollard 1992, Smith 1965a, Ucko *et al.* 1991, Whittle 1991, 1993, 1994, Whittle and Thomas 1986). Colt Hoare (1821, 45) rode across and commented on Fyfield Down and - of course, - carried out a small excavation one morning at Rowden Mead into what is almost certainly our site WC (*below* Chap. 7). The first systematic study involving our area was, however, as late as 1885 when the Rev. A.H. Smith published (the 2nd edition of) his *British and Roman Antiquities of North Wiltshire*. Crawford (1993) followed up with some typically casual and percipient primary field observations and comment but no further systematic work was published until Piggott (1942, 1950). It was that which was very much in mind as the model when the author first walked on to Fyfield Down early in 1959 with Collin Bowen, and it was still a major stimulant when Gingell (1980), a site supervisor on OD XI (*below* Chap. 5) in the 1960s, began his own project on the Marlborough Downs in the 1970s. Gingell's (1992) work produced a substantial body of primary evidence from the Downs which bears directly on this report.

Even more important in some senses is the more recent long-term project in the Kennet valley (Evans *et al.* 1993) precisely because its *locus* was in the valley and not on the downs. Furthermore, it was led by palaeo-environmental considerations, not archaeological sites,

acquiring its data from non-monumental contexts and attempting to place them in a broad temporal context. It did not seek, however, seriously to consider downland matters, environmental or archaeological, perpetuating the perhaps unconscious tradition that, because the archaeologies of downland and bottomland are different in their appearance and method of record and acquisition, the two *locales* are functionally as well as environmentally separate. The opportunity is therefore taken here to attempt to relate, even synthesise, two bodies of hitherto largely discrete data from the same area on and around the south-west corner of the Marlborough Downs (*below* Chaps. 9-11).

The Fyfod Project

An *Assessment Report and Project Design* for English Heritage preliminary to approval of grant for the preparation of this monograph was titled *FYFOD: Fyfield and West Overton, Wiltshire* (Fowler *et al.* 1995). The word 'Fyfod' was an invented one, from **Fy**field and **O**verton **D**owns, an acronym correctly indicating where the core of the project lies even though it does not reflect its parochial scope. Initially 'the Fyfod project' meant specifically the post-fieldwork/excavation phase of preparation for publication and archive during 1995-6, as distinct from all earlier work; but the name has proved so useful as an indicative shorthand label that it is used here, as appropriate, for the project as a whole, 1959-96.

The Fyfod project, of course, developed from earlier work in the area as outlined *above*; but from its inception it was a conscious attempt to move away from individual monuments, and big ones in particular. This author's immediate and very powerful inspiration behind this approach was Collin Bowen, to whom he was fortunate to be a very junior colleague in 1959; but just behind him were the influential writings of the un-met O.G.S. Crawford and the teaching of W.G. Hoskins. Since none of them were able to excavate, however, attribution for the addition of this tool to a fieldworker's armoury should be made to Ian Richmond, George Jobey and Charles and Nicholas Thomas. With his background, plus a strong re-action to History as it had been taught at Oxford, the project deliberately set out to explore the potential of the ordinary, the inconspicuous, the accidental, the by-product, the plentiful, the common, the inconsequential - fields, lynchets, tracks, boundaries, settlements, even archaeologically-empty spaces, rather than those archaeologically ever-attractive funerary, ceremonial and military monuments built to show and to last by the great and good of their time. It was thought that such unglamorous and common evidence might have a direct relationship with the daily life of ordinary people through the ages, and with their surroundings. The thought was one that, three generations earlier, had inspired Pitt Rivers to tackle lowly humps and bumps on Cranborne Chase. His approach was in the direct conceptual, but sadly not proprietorial,

genealogy of Fyfod; and that the thought appealed again in the late 1950s, as one can now appreciate a generation later, is because it was then as much an artefact typical of its time as it was hoped a lynchet would be of 960 BC (*cf.* this author on archaeology in the intellectual climate when the Experimental Earthworks Project began, in Bell *et al.* 1996, xxiv-xxvi) .

The project also sought to move into considerations of landscape, and of process in the two dimensions of local space and long-termism (an inadequate Latin-derived English equivalent of *la longue durée*). It was not originally envisaged that it would itself become quite so long-term but, on the other hand, time through a life-time has lent a certain understanding to the view, not least in seeing the effects of the accumulation of many small landscape changes over a generation. Locally something of a pioneering effort, at least in its early stages, its approach has of course subsequently become routine and indeed overtaken methodologically. Compared to the 1990s, Fyfod is weak, for example, in its lack of radio-carbon estimates, its non-use of statistical methods and GIS technology, and in the poverty of its palaeo-environmental evidence. On the other hand, especially in comparison to earlier work in Wessex, it employed not only wide spatial and temporal frameworks but also a range of methodologies and evidences, some pushed further than others. It consciously sought, for example, to put excavation in its place, not as subsidiary but as sequential to fieldwork; rather than the latter being something that you might do if you remembered, sometime before or even after 'finishing the dig', to look up from the self-justifying trench which archaeologists seemed to assume archaeology was about. So, while excavation was envisaged as having a key role in the project from the start, its function was seen as somewhat different from the frankly semi-glamorous, antiquarian and narrowly structural approaches to much excavation at the time. Excavating a *medieval* site on Wessex Chalk was sin enough (Chap. 7); to cut little trenches in the middle of nowhere (as in Pl. 4.00), especially when so much 'real archaeology' lay so obviously about, just seemed crazy to some. Hence this volume's dedicatees, who believed in the approach and the methodology.

If Fyfod has strengths, they lie in the quality of its fieldwork and closely associated use of air photographic interpretation and cartography, both for their own sake as lines of enquiry and also in setting the agenda for excavation; in its use of excavation as a question-specific tool; and in its attempts to integrate, during investigation and now, its interpretations with several different strands of evidence such as those from natural history and documentary sources.

In 1959, as now, the project's primary aim was to investigate the history of the landscape of Overton and Fyfield Downs. This aim has continually been refined and expanded to allow for

changing theoretical frameworks and the quality and quantity of the usable data-set (Chap 10). A concept of 'the history of the downland landscape' quickly became 'and the river valley', whereupon it was realised, of course, that neither was intrinsically more significant historically than the wooded high ground to the south, and that none of the triad could be understood functionally without the others. The result has been to suggest an outline landscape history through study of the changing prehistoric and historic dimensions within the study area, identifying the importance of change through time as an influence on past societies as well as on the evolution of this landscape and on different spatial structures making up the various landscapes at different times (Chap. 11). We have come to realise the importance of not just how we see these landscapes but rather of how people in the past saw *their* landscapes - a sort of palaeo-phenomenology, to adapt a fashionable 1990s term (Tilley 19++).

By moving on early from a contemplation of the Downs alone to an embrace of the whole of the parochial territories, the project took account of how the range of resources disposed non-randomly across the landscape was exploited in the past. It also simultaneously related itself to units of land and processes within them which were 'real' rather than theoretical or evidenced merely as the result of archaeological survival. 'Real', deliberately used as a dangerous word, here of course means that the parochial units provided a spatial framework for many people living and working in Fyfield and Overton in the past, certainly from over a thousand years ago and arguably longer; and that, therefore, some of their activities and the processes in which they were involved can be usefully, though not exclusively, studied in relation to that framework.

The project around which this monograph is based began in 1959 and has continued into 1996. Because it has been spread over 37 years, it is important to appreciate that it has always been pursued periodically and part-time and that those involved have always, until 1994-6, worked voluntarily and been amateurs in the proper sense of that word. In one sense, that is a matter of pride as well as of record; but it would be an incomplete record not to volunteer the thought that the voluntary nature of the project has, in academic and professional terms, also been its Achilles heel, notably in not bringing at least the excavations to appropriate publication earlier. The fact is, not so much that the project overall outgrew its volunteer resources but that, especially with its director somewhat busy elsewhere with other matters, the excavations produced too much material to be handled properly by part-time and sporadic effort. That perhaps could not be foreseen in 1959, when 'writing up' as it was then called was assumed to be an unpaid, voluntary and part-time task, almost as a hobby; but it had been realised to be the case a decade later when, partly also because the law of

diminishing return seems to be applying, all Fyfod excavation stopped. Nevertheless, the logistical damage had been done, and it has only been because of a concentration of full-time, paid and professional resources in 1995-6 that the work has been brought to a stage of publication and accessible public archive. Eloquent of so many changes in archaeology, and the way it is now done, are the facts that the excavated material has been professionally prepared for publication by a third party, not the excavator, and that the director, hitherto an amateur in these matters, enjoyed 9 months salaried leave of absence in 1995 to 'write up.'

The Scope of the Project

The two parishes of Fyfield and (now West) Overton stretch from their common north point high on the Marlborough Downs southwards for some 5 kms. to the western edges of Savernake Forest. Together their shape is roughly that of a triangle (fig. 1.00). Conceptually and methodologically the geographical space they occupy can be expressed in terms of 'a model of intensity of investigation' (figs. 1.00, 1.00) containing:

- i) the **core area or nucleus (Zone 1)**: this nucleus of grass downland, comprising the northern block of land across both parishes, was intensively surveyed and selectively excavated. All the excavations were within it (fig. 1.00).
- ii) an **inner penumbra (Zone 2)**: this downland area, roughly the northern third of the two parishes completely surrounding Zone 1, saw extensive and systematic surveying.
- iii) an **outer penumbra (Zone 3)**: this takes in the remainder of the two parishes and embraces the full range of local resources in effectively two parallel transects across the grain of the topography. Here extensive, largely reconnaissance and non-systematic, non-metrical fieldwork, was carried out.

Two important points were quickly learned in the early stages of the initial project from work within these 'zones'. Firstly, it was realised that the Downs could not be studied in isolation. Secondly it could be confidently predicted that the results generated would not be restricted to a local significance, even though study of one area was their intended aim. While the area selected for detailed ground study (Zone 1) was, by the standards of the day, relatively large, it was clearly not enough in itself to sustain functional self-sufficiency, partly because of its small size in agrarian terms, partly - and more importantly than the size factor - because it embraced only a restricted range of resources, notably soil type. It matters a lot to our understanding of landscape to know where people were living and what they were exploiting in the countryside (Fowler 1975, 121). As exemplified in figs. 5.00 and 5.00, history in the core area (Zone 1) on the Downs was seen as inevitably closely

linked to what people made of resources of the valley below and the woods beyond (Zones 2 & 3).

The information required to tackle these fundamental questions was provided, indoors, from the primary sources of air photographic, documentary and cartographic evidence, printed and MSS, and of museum collections and their documentation, and from published material; and, in the field, by ground reconnaissance, analytical fieldwork, taking and analysing air photographs and field-checking the results, sketch survey, metrical survey, fieldwalking on arable, continual photography, and talking to people. Primary evidence was also acquired from a series of excavations. Three main excavations were undertaken, as were a number of smaller ones which, although logistically less demanding, were also crucial in identifying phases of landscape development.

These excavations, including their codenames, are as follows:

Three main excavations:

CODE	DESCRIPTION
ODX & ODXI (Chap. 5)	Overton Down: c.30m sq. of one embanked and ditched Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age settlement earlier than 'Celtic' fields (figs. 5.00-5.00).
ODXII (Chap. 6)	S end of Overton Down: the whole(?) of one late Romano-British farm on top of 'Celtic' fields (figs. 6.00-6.00).
WC (Chap. 7)	Wroughton Copse, Fyfield Down: much of one medieval farm (figs. 7.00-7.00).

The smaller excavations (all **Chap. 4**):

CODE	DESCRIPTION
ODI	N. end of Overton Down: trench across a Bronze Age linear ditch which cut Beaker occupation (fig. 4.00).
ODII	N. end of Overton Down: small excavation around (presumably) a Neolithic axe-sharpening stone (figs. 4.00-4.00).
ODIII	N. end of Overton Down: small excavation on a stone structure (fig. 4.00).
ODVIII & ODXIX	Totterdown: two trenches across a Bronze Age linear ditch (fig. 4.00-4.00).
FDI + FD2-6	Fyfield Down: the major trench cut through a large 'Celtic' field lynchet; with subsidiary cuttings (figs. 4.00-4.00)
TDI, Ia, II, IIa, IIb & III	Totterdown: six cuttings to date a Roman field system (figs. 4.00-4.00).

NO CODE: Down Barn enclosure; Delling enclosure	Two other excavations were carried out by Marlborough College schoolmasters. Down Barn enclosure was post-Roman; Delling enclosure was 17th century.
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The scope of the project was, therefore, very wide-ranging, both in terms of the timescale involved, some 5000 years, and the area under discussion.

this extract lifted from old chap 4: not needed?: INTRODUCTION

Archaeological excavation was a key part of the methodology used in the project. In concept, it was always the hand-maiden of both the main objectives and other lines of enquiry, though at times its own prerogatives temporarily took over (see *below* Chaps. 5-7). Initially, however, each project excavation was planned to answer specific questions arising from fieldwork, mainly to elucidate sequence and function in trying to understand the workings of the landscape at various times, and therefore its evolution.

In the event, excavation was confined to the downland over the northern part of the two parishes (fig. 1.00). They occupy some 26 sq. kms. (c 2590 ha.; 6400 acres) of which less than a hectare (c 2 acres), that is about 0.03%, were excavated. Excavation, in other words, quantitatively fell somewhat short of the size of areas routinely examined in the 1980-90s and did not begin to approach the objective of total excavation of a parish which this author has long felt desirable if we really want to change perception of what actually went on in the English landscape. A different excavation strategy to that followed here could have produced totally different results. Several similar excavation programmes to that described here (Chaps. 4-7) could be profitably pursued in other parts of the study area; and indeed other lines of enquiry could well be pursued in the Fyfod core area itself. The point is touched on again in Chap. 12 (p. 00).

Excavation was, clearly, highly selective in this project, not only in its size, absolute and relative, but more particularly in its targets. It was used specifically to date, and to examine the structure of, fields, a key relict element of the downland landscape; and to investigate the nature of some other features related to fields and land-use. Although environmental investigation and sampling at 1990s standards was not undertaken, the environmental dimension was conceptually there from the start, not least because of the influence of the Experimental Earthworks Committee in general and Professor G. W. Dimbleby and his then post-graduate student (now Professor) J. G. Evans in particular (reflected throughout Jewell 1963 and Bell *et al.* 1996; see also Fowler and Evans 1967, and Evans 1972, 318-22). Logistically, the main excavation effort went into fairly extensive work on three settlements, respectively of late prehistoric, late Roman and medieval

date, which together provided a useful chronological and functional range across the landscape (Chaps. 5-7). Here we first report briefly on eight other excavations which, like the big ones, were conceived as small intrusions but, unlike the big ones, stayed small. They all provided, as was intended, critical evidence about phases of landscape development. Five of them (4.A-4.E) were carried out directly by the project team; one (4.F) was carried out by others in pursuing other but related objectives in the project's core area (involving this author in another guise, not least as director of excavations); and two (4.G, 4.H) were executed by others as a direct result of Fyfod fieldwork and on the project's suggestion.

A longer, more detailed version of this text exists in the Archive. Several other archaeological excavations have been carried out in the area and its immediate vicinity, both before and since 1959 when the first project trench was cut (Cutting 1 on site WC, see Chap. 7). They are listed and briefly summarised at the end of this chapter.
end of extract

The author first visited Fyfield and Overton in May 1958, specifically to look at the 'Field System' on Boreham Down which was then shown on the OS 1 inch map (Sheet 157). Disappointingly for one who wanted to find out about 'ancient fields', they were already under plough and difficult for the novice eye to see. The author and Collin Bowen then visited Fyfield Down early in 1959, specifically to look at an earthwork enclosure which, on air photographic evidence (CUCAP AUU 97), appeared to lie on top of 'Celtic' fields (ref. St.J's public. of it). The enclosure site (WC) was selected as a relatively simple-looking site suitable for beginners in archaeological excavation and one where, if dated, a useful *terminus ante quem* for the underlying 'Celtic' fields could be obtained (Bowen and Fowler 1962). In mind, though not stated, was the thought that the enclosure could well be one of the Piggott variety which could therefore push an horizon for the fields back into the LBA at the very latest. It has to be recalled now that, at the time, many of the components of what in Wessex are now regarded as MBA were then regarded as LBA and c 750 BC; and that 'Celtic' fields were thought of only daringly as early as that and were generally thought of as belonging to the Iron Age *sensu* 500-1 BC except by the OS which mapped them as Roman (OS 19++, reflected in general in Grinsell 1958).

The first excavation began in May 1959 on the Wroughton Copse site (see frontespiece). By 1963, WC had been extensively excavated (Chap. 7) and the main phases of the development of the landscape had been defined through detailed fieldwork and 'keyhole surgery' type excavation at key spots (Chap. 4). As a result, the season of 1965 was spent surveying (largely published in Fowler 1966). Then, between 1966 and 1968, the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age settlement (ODX/XI: Chap. 5) and the late-Romano-British settlement (ODXII: Chap. 6) were extensively excavated (Fowler 1969, 128).

By 1970 all of the excavations were over and the scale of out-of-doors activities relating to the project was reduced. Work indoors continued, however, and considerable post-excavation progress was made with Extra-Mural students at Bristol University, on Monday evenings with the author and on weekday mornings with Elizabeth Fowler; but the huge task was not completed. Then, around 1990 a burst of new work on this material was stimulated by the occasion of the 32nd-year section of the Overton Down Experimental Earthwork (Bell *et al.* 1996).

This resultant report is inevitably based upon the nature of the project as it was carried out at the time, that is with the general evolution of the landscape being the main priority. The excavations, conceived of as hand-maidens to that priority, enabled specific questions and detail to be added to that picture, but of course have also provided information both about the excavated sites in their own right and about other aspects of the area.

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

The principal excavations have been (this list probably worth doing properly? - rough draft off the top of my head 5.iv.96. Include the LIST here but put the relevant data + interpretations in the appropriate places in the appropriate windows of the new structure. This list can then have x-ref. to page no. where write-up is. pjf 5. vii. 96.):

List of non-project excavations in Fyfield and Overton parishes:

Expt. ewk. excavations
Gill Swanton: her barrow;
JGEvans et al: cuttings at North Farm PPS
I Smith and Simpson: Rldgeway barrow PPS
I Smith : Roman barrows WAM
B Eagles AS burials from above WAM
RJC Atkinson: Manton long barrow: unpub but summary in Barker WAM
J Pollard for Overton Hill summary inc. Sanctuary PPS 1992
J Birmingham: barrow W of Ridgeway opp. N Overton Dn: unpublished:
?note in PPS c 1960?
?Meyrick: fieldwk and finds but excav? - The Beeches?? G Swanton WAM
Colt Hoare: Wroughton Mead Anc. Wilts. II
Who originally dug Devil's Den?
Small's sarsen excavs. in 1960s: any finds or archaeol. records?

Green on Wansdyke: is it in study area? - WAM

List does not include archaeol. observation of non-archaeol. holes e.g the two pipelines which have gone along the Kennet valley, or the med pott. from Lockeridge village: it is confined to deliberate excavations and perhaps ought to keep to deliberate ARCHAEOLOGICAL excavations

Original Research Aims

Work on the project was initially prompted by the extraordinary state of archaeological preservation on Fyfield and Overton Down, so striking at a time - the late 1950s - early 1960s, - when comparable earthwork evidence was being so visibly and savagely destroyed over much of Wessex in pursuit of an agricultural policy aimed at making the nation as self-sufficient as possible in food (cf. 000000, 19££, Fowler 1968). This point is specifically acknowledged in the first paragraph of the first interim report (Bowen and Fowler 1962, 98), the belief being that study of the well-preserved would assist understanding of the damaged and destroyed. Although in one sense the project was conceived as 'pure' research and carried out almost as a luxury on well-preserved and unthreatened remains, the motivation behind the 'rescue' archaeology articulated so forcefully a decade later (Rahtz 1971) was very much in the minds of the Fyfod originators. That fact is perhaps not so surprising when their daily official lives were concerned with the recording and 'tentative analysis of vanishing earthworks and landscapes' (RCHM 1960 (A Matter of Time), Bowen 1961). It should also be remembered that the actual occasion for much of the work, and source of most of the small-scale funding that was available, was educational, that is the provision of training in archaeological techniques for adult 'Extra-Mural' students.

Overall, an early appraisal of the area suggested that its visible archaeological qualities combined with a potential to date phases of landscape development by question-specific excavation. The initial objective, therefor, as stated unequivocally in the first interim report was, and remains:

'... to establish ...the forms and sequence of human activity in the region. This involves a search for the areas of primary occupation, a consideration of settlement types and pattern and their development, of fields and pasture, boundaries, ritual and burial structures, of continuity and communications, and of the relationship of all to each other, to natural features and to conditions in different phases.' (Bowen & Fowler 1962, 98)

In more contemporary terms, the main original aim can therefore be summarised as:

The establishment of the main phases of human activity in the area in different periods and in relation to the natural environment overall, and especially in terms of landscape development with particular reference to questions of rupture, survival and continuity over four or more millennia.

This potential, and the approach to it, enabled two principal questions to be posed from the outset:

`How, why and when did the landscape, particularly the landscape of the Downs, evolve into its twentieth century form?`

and

`What types of economic activity were carried out in the study area and how were they distributed within it?`

It is consequently possible to identify retrospectively a series of sub-questions with which the project became involved, whether or not explicitly acknowledged at the time. In part these relate directly to, and arise directly from, the prime, original objective i.e. to enhance understanding of the landscape's historical evolution. In part, however, both raised, and/or pointed to, new lines of enquiry.

These can be indicated as questions:

a. `To what extent is the downland 'marginal':

- i) in area?
- ii) in terms of settlement pattern, through time and at different times?
- iii) economically, tenurially and socially?`

b. Is it possible to define the or a history of the changing pattern of land use?

c. What was the chronology, extent and function of the 'Celtic' fields?

d. Do the types of settlement represented in the study area increase understanding of settlement morphology?

Further objectives emerged as the project developed and the strengths and weakness of both data and methodology became apparent. Field survey led not merely to a 'feel' for the landscape but the rapid discovery of many new sites in a manner which has since become very familiar. In particular it led to the recognition of phases of chronological development in the landscape (*below* in Chap. 2), demonstrable land-use zones within the landscape (*below*

in Chap. 3), and to specific places where relative and possible absolute dating evidence could be obtained (*below* in Chaps. 4-7). Feedback between air photography and survey, between both and documentary evidence, and between survey, excavation and documentary/cartographic evidence played a particularly important part in the conceptual development of how as much as what to investigate in the study area. As a result, in its now-evolved and mature form, the original project can be interrogated to consider yet further questions:

- a. How has the environment of the area changed over time and what were/are/have been the consequences of such changes?
- b. What, in chronological terms, were the main phases of human activity in the area?
- c. How did the excavated sites function within the landscape, with particular reference to economic activity?
- d. What can we infer about the nature of 'marginal' land? And if the Downs (and forested area) were indeed 'marginal', how was this marginal land exploited at different times?
- e. What does the evidence tell us about changing methods of farming and land-use?
- f. What does the evidence tell us about changes in settlement pattern, settlement morphology and building types?
- g. Are there constructive pointers to the use of evidence in interpretation in considering comparatively a rural settlement with, and rural settlements without, contemporary documentation? i.e. just compare how we handle the evidence from, and what we make of, WC and ODXII.

Overall, early acquaintance with the area suggested that quite long periods of time were unrepresented on the Downs by any evidence on the ground i.e. earthworks. This led to the suggestion of breaks in the continuity of local land-use (Fowler 1975, 121). Given the project's objectives, it also emphasised the importance of looking at as wide a range of evidence as possible and not just relying on either archaeological evidence or archaeological approaches. Place- and field-names, for example, and field botany, were sources of evidence now routinely invoked but brought to bear in the Fyfod study area in the 1960s. The issue of continuity itself needed to be defined first and then examined; now it needs to be re-examined carefully (Chap. 11). It appears at the moment that continuity on the Downs, from the Neolithic onwards, is in only general terms of community or agrarian regime and that any unbroken occupation of one site is doubtful (*ibid.* 123). It is possible, therefore, that

ruptures and discontinuities are more characteristic than continuities in several lines of enquiry, and some points are further discussed in Chap. 10.

? to be supplied?: A DISCUSSION OF HOW METHODOLOGY HAS CHANGED AND AFFECTED OUR RESEARCH AIMS ETC... THIS SHOULD INCLUDE BOTH THE CHANGE FROM A LESS SCIENTIFIC ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO ONE IN WHICH IT IS VITAL. THIS IS OF PARTICULARLY IMPORTANCE IN RELATION TO THE BONE AND FLINT REPORTS, AND WHY ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING HAS BEEN SO SPARSE. REFERENCE TO THE SIMILAR SITUATION ENCOUNTERED DURING THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL EARTHWORK WOULD BE USEFUL.

METHODOLOGY [FOR EACH CATEGORY DESCRIBE THE EVIDENCE EMPLOYED AND WHERE IT LIES WITHIN THE MONOGRAPH ie A SHORT PIECE ON AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC TRANSCRIPTION FOLLOWED BY PAGE REFERENCE]

THIS REPORT

The structure is based on the classic triad of say what you are going to do, do it, and then say what you have done. Part I (this section) sets the scene geographically, archaeologically and logistically. Part II, the bulk of this report and the archive (*see below*), deals with the primary evidence and its acquisition in nine chapters. Though the central part (Chaps. 4-7) of this section is arranged broadly in relation to a chronological progression, its basis is actually a categorisation of evidence: aerial photography and its interpretive mapping, field archaeology, excavation, documentary and cartographic sources, and environmental data. It clearly also covers much methodological ground e.g. the 'windows' approach to the study area in Chap. 3, the overtly selective manner of reporting on excavations in Chaps. 5-7 especially, and the 'squeezing' of 10th century charters and later fiscal documents specifically to serve the purposes of a 20th century intellectual construct, 'landscape archaeology.' Part III should be a conclusion, and it does indeed offer responses to the questions *above* (though not always directly); but we do not believe any specific conclusion is either desirable or likely to be correct in any absolute or permanent sense. The three chapters are interwoven but are arranged successively around themes respectively of the general and theoretical, the local and imaginative, and concepts of . The section is of course about interpretations but interpretation as a dialogue between peoples, place and time. It is essentially about ideas, ideas about archaeology and research, about the place and history, and about abstractions such as resource, stewardship and World Heritage. It might give

pause for thought, about their commonality for example, that the study of a parish pump ends with such a global, and noble, concept.

THE ARCHIVE

A final methodological point concerns the archive. The concept of an ordered and publicly accessible archive to the Fyfod project has been fundamental to the intensive work of 1994-6 in attempting to complete the project satisfactorily. Such an archive is seen as quite as important an output as this published report. Certainly, during 1995-6, preparation of the archive has absorbed if anything more resource than the preparation of this report. But the significance is much greater. The two are conceived as an integrated product, each dependent on the other. Certainly the nature of this publication is heavily conditioned by the existence, nature and accessibility of the archive.

The archive itself is described in more detail with its Catalogue in Appendix 3.
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Something along these following lines, following the Assessment Rpt., should be outlined here in Chap. 1 - or have we said enough?? Anyway, the following act as reminders of what we are about and in any case the questions should be picked up again in chap 10.:

The following section aims to answer the questions Fyfod originally addressed. Nevertheless, interpretations and evaluations change over time and thus these questions may need to be revised to reflect present day fields of enquiry. A list of revised (where necessary) research aims therefore appears in section 2.7.2.. Firstly, however, is an overview of how far the project's original research aims have been satisfied.

The evolution of the landscape - How, Why and When?

The variety, extent and excellent state of preservation of features visible in the landscape is one of the key strengths of the project. This complex of evidence is additionally of high scientific importance in that each individual component occurs within the matrix of a 'cultural landscape' full of cross-references and relationships - topographical, chronological, functional, economic and social.e. For example, can landscape change be partially explained in terms not only of economic activity, but also in terms of social changes and the manipulation of people and resources?

Economic activity and distribution within the landscape

An understanding of the types of economic activities carried out in the study area has to a large extent been achieved. The landscape of Fyfield and

Overton is essentially a farming one. This makes it of basic significance since it represents what most communities have been involved in the UK over the last six thousand years or so. It is therefore a landscape of exploitation but, equally important, it is also a landscape of sustainability, not least through husbandry and adaptation. In this respect, the 'special' resources of the area are significant in terms of the local economy, notably the availability of ancient forest, Savernake, along the southern edge of the parishes, and of surface stone in the form of sarsen (sandstone) blocks concentrated in 'trains' in the valleys but also widely scattered across the downs. Evans *et al.* (1993) have clearly demonstrated the dynamic nature of some of this landscape, and the FYFOD project can demonstrate its complement at a time when both are witnessing changes at least in part induced by economics, for example the ebb and low of arable on the valley slopes and the varying importance of hunting. Now, of course, the economic significance of the landscape lies quite as much in its conservation interest as it does in farming.

The 'marginality' of the study area: settlement & landuse patterns

The archaeology of the study area brings out a nice contrast between relatively large, nucleated settlements and isolated farmsteads. This immediately challenges the conventional wisdom about nucleation being a characteristic of the 'Lowland Zone' (and vice versa), making the nice point that 'Highland' and 'Lowland' might perhaps be local and relative as well as national and absolute. Nucleated settlements can be seen and are documented in the valleys but not on the plateaux; there, small habitations are evidenced, at least since Roman times, though they seem to exist in relation tenurially to the valley settlements and economically to their immediate surroundings. Another challenging model exists therein, to be followed up. Similarly, but bringing in the time dimension, can we ask why it was that social aggregations as indicated on Overton Down (but not on Fyfield Down) were present in the 1st millennium BC and the Roman period, but not thereafter? Clearly there are major social implications, as well as the environmental and economic, in the data.

Further objectives emerged as the project developed and the strengths and weakness of both data and methodology became apparent. Feedback between air photography and survey, between both and documentary evidence, and between survey and excavation played a particularly important part. Excavation, for example, was characteristically designed to investigate specific features at specific places to 'answer' precisely defined questions.

The 'Celtic' fields: chronology, extent & function

The available evidence establishes three different sorts of 'Celtic' field (*i.e.* not just 'a type'), which can be distinguished typologically as well as chronologically. Since the fields are major components of three different landscapes (1st and 2nd millennium BC and Roman periods), the potential clearly lies in detailing the morphology and extent of these fields and properly mapping them. In turn, the evidence from the 'Celtic' fields may well mean we are able to discover whether such fields persist into the Anglo-Saxon period or whether they fall out of use in the 2nd century AD. Furthermore, the quality of the ard-mark evidence is sufficiently good enough to make a definitive statement not only about their date, but also about the sort of implement and operation that created them. Furthermore, we should be able to say more about what is their most puzzling feature, that is the fact that they have survived at all in this particular context.

The changing environment & its effects

In conjunction with Evans *et al.*, the whole picture of how valley, valley sides and downland are interlinked can be further clarified.

In addition, our aim to study the effects of environmental change on the landscape of the two Downs, is now given added point by the questions posed by recent dendrochronological research and, in the case of WC, by documentary evidence of devastating climatic conditions in the early 14th century. Archaeologically both may well have extremely interesting implications for the precise dating of pottery and other artefacts (see also '*Medieval rural settlement*').

Interpretation: contemporary documentation and archaeological data

It is apparent already from renewed documentary sources (published and original) that there will be several interesting points to make about the way in which interpretation is both conceptualised and developed when written and cartographic evidence is available. The interrogation of evidence from comparable archaeological sites, with and without documentation, is encouraging further thought about interpretation (Chap. 10).

Additional project-specific research aims

A1. Is there a distinction between highland and lowland, local and relative, as well as national and absolute?

A2. Why is social aggregation on Overton Down present in the 1st Millennium BC and Roman period, but not later, and not at all on Fyfield Down?

Additional general research aims

A7. To what extent do Fyfield and Overton Downs typify the chalk downlands of southern England?

A8. To what extent are models, other than those recently discussed by Evans *et al* (1993), created by looking at a major transect across the grain of topography instead of along the river valley?

A9. Can we generalise from the FYFOD evidence to an overall model for the use and abandonment of Celtic field systems, as now one of the major questions is how long the latest phase went on into the 1st millennium AD.

A10. Does the FYFOD evidence suggest that landscape evolution develops as much in response to economic change as to other (e.g. environmental or political) fluctuations?

Significance of the Data

It appears in particular to be able to contribute to TWO of the major themes identified in *Exploring Our Past*, pages 34-43, namely *Processes of Change* and *Landscapes*.

1. Processes of Change (*ibid.* 35-37)

***Communal monuments into settlement and field landscapes.**

It is relevant to remember that the study area makes up a significant element of the hunterland to Avebury and Windmill Hill, being very much part of the landscape of megaliths and earthen barrows, long and round, disposed around the upper reaches of the Kennet valley. The 'domestication' of this landscape of monumental earthworks in the course of the Bronze Age/ Iron Age can be charted in detail in the FYFOD study area. The land is partitioned by function and divided by territory. Large areas of fields, of arable and pasture, and of smaller area of settlement, become discernible. A LBA/ EIA settlement (ODXI), for example, occupies the same area as long-forgotten 'Beaker' burials. Equally, the increasingly formal marking out of land boundaries is extremely well represented in the FYFOD area by ditches, banks, sarsen boundary marker stones, trackways and lynchets. In addition, the possibility of dating ard marks more precisely than has been hitherto practicable, may very well prove of great import. Naturally, being able to date all these features more confidently will assist in formulating a clearer picture of the land use change c.1300-300BC, which at present 'remains poorly understood' (*ibid.* 36).

***Briton into Roman.**

Evidence of both continuity and rupture in settlement and land use during the Late Iron Age and into the Romano-British period is apparent on Fyfield and Overton Downs. ODXI (Iron Age) and ODXII (Romano-British), two settlements some 300 metres apart, contain evidence relating to communities and land use in the first centuries BC/AD and the study area in general exhibits numerous changes which took place during that period e.g. new fields on Totterdown (Fig. 8). Behind such evidence lies the whole question, begged by the villa underneath Fyfield church for example, of when exploitation of the valley seriously began.

***The early medieval period.**

The availability now of both archaeological evidence regionally for the pagan Saxon period and various models for cultural change in the mid-1st millennium, are already helping in shifting our attention from the details of ODXII alone to more general questions in what had until recently rather been thought to be a 'blank' in the history of the area.

***Late Saxon period.**

'Major reorganisation of the cultivated landscape may also have occurred in this period; studies of its field systems, crops and husbandry are likely to continue to produce results' (*ibid.* 37). Here, the FYFOD project can make a considerable contribution, mainly because of the opportunity to relate landscape history to tenurial documentation. In particular, two 10th century Saxon estate charters have been largely worked out on the ground, but the implications of this exercise require further study. Here a window is evident for us to consider the processes of change, especially in estate formation immediately before and after Domesday Book.

***Transition from medieval to post-medieval.**

Because of the great extent and quality of the archaeological and landscape record in 16/17th centuries and the better quality of the documentation than hitherto appreciated, the FYFOD project offers the opportunity to study in some detail a landscape undergoing rapid change as a direct result of proprietorial and tenurial changes following the Dissolution of the monasteries (Fig. 23). The change is specifically from medieval ecclesiastical estates to those of the Earl of Pembroke and Wilton House.

2. Landscapes (*ibid.* 37-39)

Although the original project was not conceived in chronological terms, it can now readily conform, in modern parlance, to a 'landscape project ...defined as multi-period intensive investigation ...of a locality, which may lie ...across

several (landscape types)' (*ibid.* 37-38). The original project therefore possessed what is now identified as a strength in that it investigated 'settlement and landuse patterns across two or more landscape categories' (*ibid.* 38). It is unnecessary to emphasise again the importance in the FYFOD project of relict field systems, both in their own right and as 'landscape horizons'; but we would stress here the relevance of FYFOD to the priority identified (*ibid.*) 'to recognising the patterns of ancient fields and **estate boundaries**' (our emphasis).

****Medieval rural settlement***

FYFOD can make a signal contribution to the understanding of this topic as an apparently 'classic' example of settlement pattern in chalkland southern England. The model of expansion in the 11th to 13th centuries, followed by decline in the 14th and 15th centuries and change in the 16th and thereafter (see '***Transition from Medieval...***' above), can here be rigorously tested. Though 'environmental and social circumstances' (*ibid.* 39) may indeed have been influential, land ownership, estate management and the workings of tenure are probably the keys to understanding the settlement pattern in the study area at the micro-level.

At that level, Wroughton Copse is potentially of enormous importance. Firstly, if documentary and archaeological evidence tie, it may be possible to date many of the artefacts, including sherds, precisely; that is to say **to within one year**. If this is the case, the consequences are manifold. Secondly, if WC was abandoned due to appalling weather conditions early in the 13th century and the subsequent Great Famine of 1315-22, archaeologists will be able to contribute further 'to important debates and controversies hitherto ...largely the preserve of economic historians' (*ibid.* 37).

2.6.2. Group value

The FYFOD project is very much concerned with, not a single monument acquiring significance 'by association with a group of related contemporary monuments', but a whole landscape which gives significance to its component parts. It does this by providing a stratigraphical context which affords a chronology, absolute and relative, and a matrix, environmental and cultural, for each component. Within these contexts are a number of monuments, complexes and relationships which are rare. The southern half of Overton Down, for example, is a rare surviving complex precisely because it embraces a range of common earthworks in a matrix of demonstrable, and now largely dateable, relationships.

Unique qualities

The FYFOD area ought not to be unique but it is moving very close to acquiring that status in several respects. This is due in part to the continuing cultivation of 'old chalk grassland', which has made it very rare as an extensive area of such habitat in Wessex, and to the extent and quality of the long investigation which FYFOD seeks to bring into the public arena in an appropriate manner. It is unlikely, too, that such a field project will be replicated in like circumstances in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the very high research potential of the area, stemming in part from the quality of surviving evidence and in part from the data and understanding now available, should be noted, for the whole area is very much a scientific resource.

2.7. Conclusions

2.7.1. Potential of the archive

Since the project was initially conceived on the basis of two central questions (section 2.1.), each involving great time-depth and consideration of basic activities, there is a high potential for further analysis and publication within and without the scope of the FYFOD project. The data could and should be used to address other archaeological issues and indeed issues other than specifically archaeological ones. Interdisciplinary, multi-objective land management is an example, as is GIS work. As the above section dealing with the site archive has made clear, there is a considerable potential here. We are encouraged in that part of our work for this report which has involved testing and interrogating the original record. It has stood up well so far to our examination of it, so we illustrate its nature (Figs. 18, 19, 20 & 21) to exemplify what we believe to be its reliability and potential. For the purposes of the FYFOD project, however, the boundaries still remain tightly defined. Despite other research topics with the potential for further analysis and publication, e.g. GIS, the primary objective will be to publish as appropriate the original evidence and an interpretive discussion of it in relation to the matters already defined above.

2.7.2. Revised research aims

With the preceding overview of present knowledge to hand, it is now possible to reassess the project's original aims, to refocus our thoughts and rephrase our questions. Once the FYFOD data has answered the following questions, we shall have gone a long way to answering that original and fundamental question: 'How, why and when did the landscape, particularly of the Downs, evolve into its 20th century form?', or put so succinctly in another fashion back in 1959 by Peter Fowler; 'How the present landscape comes to look like what it does today'.

R1. How does the environment of the area change over time? (**O4.**)

R2. What were the main phases of human activity in the area? (**O5., A3., A4 & A5**)

R3. How did the specific sites investigated function within the landscape with particular reference to economic activity? (**O2., A3., A4, A5 & O6.**)

R4. What does the evidence tell us about the exploitation of marginal land at different periods? (**O3.1., A5.3. & O7.**)

R5. What does the evidence tell us about changing methods of farming and land use? (**O3.2.** & **O8.**)

R6. What does the evidence tell us about the changes in settlement morphology? (**O3.4.** & **O9.**)

R7. To what extent do Fyfield and Overton Downs typify the chalk downlands of southern England? (**A1.** & **A7.**)

R8. To what extent are models other than those recently discussed by Evans *et al* (1993) created by looking at a major transect across the grain of the topography instead of along the river valley? (**A7.**)

R9. Can we generate from the Fyfield evidence to an overall model for the use and abandonment of 'Celtic' field systems? (**O3.3.** & **A8.**)

R10. Does the Fyfield evidence suggest that landscape evolution develops as much in response to economic change as to other (e.g. environmental) fluctuations? (**A9.**)

Structure and methodology of this monograph

Presenting the evidence: 'Zones' and 'Windows'

The application of fieldwork in the study area has already been described and expressed graphically, both as a model and in practice (*above* p. 00; fig. 1.00). The three zones bands of intensity of investigation provide a filter here through which to view the 'windows' on to the landscape. The 'view' of the Down Barn area (*below*, 'window' 4), for example, is much sharper, because it is based on intense examination, than that of West Woods ('window' 10) which was merely reconnoitred. The middle band (2 on fig. 1.00) was that which subsequently contained, and limited, the area covered by RCHM's air photographic cartography, an exercise which effectively widened the gap between bands 2 and 3 in terms of data recovery and understanding.

It seems important to realise what you are doing, **at what scale**, in examining and categorising landscape. Here is it perfectly valid to recognise at parochial scale types of land-use, and to see them in operation in fairly well-defined areas e.g. old arable on the valley sides. But it is vital to appreciate the coarseness of that perception i.e. although the parochial scale is a small one relative to a regional perception of the Marlborough Downs or the Avebury region, it is quite a large scale relative to the study area. Each one of the 'windows' used to look into each of those areas based on types of land-use actually shows that, at the micro-level of the 'window', there are small examples of different land-uses, and therefore of the coarse categories, in each of them e.g. the Down Barn 'window' (3), primarily permanent pasture,

contains both old and new arable; the Shaw 'window' (9), primarily edge of old woodland and permanent pasture, produced its most useful new data because part of it was new arable at the time of a repeat visit in 1995.

The results of this approach will be described from north to south on the basis of current land-use. That is, in presenting the evidence, as distinct from the ways in which it was gathered, our selectivity is further guided by how the land is being used now. In some respects, this approach has an historical validity in that some current use is traditional, most notably the 'permanent' arable, pasture and woodland. In addition, we then choose once more to use the principle of selection. We cannot describe and discuss the field archaeology of the whole area even-handedly, if only because we have not examined the area and its sources even-handedly (fig. 1.00). We therefore peer into these various zones of different land-uses through 'windows', small areas which for one or more reasons are worth looking at in more detail (fig. 00; further explained *below* p. 00).

Behind this method of presentation is the realisation that it is the state of the land, not the archaeology as such, which by and large influences the condition and method of recognition in our own time of the various artificial elements of the landscape. In large part, then, the field archaeology manifests itself to the contemporary observer as a direct result of how it has been treated since its formation. We are very conscious of this in this project because its evidence-gathering has been so heavily dependent on two methods, detailed fieldwork on the ground and detailed mapping and study of air photography. Our proposed 'land-use' approach to handling (as distinct from acquiring) the evidence, therefore, grows out of the very nature of the evidence itself and our records of it in our study area. In general this approach happens to reflect the 'ecological' or 'habitat' principle independently utilised by Darvill (1987) in addressing the management of the nation's archaeological resource (further discussed *below* p. 00).

'Archaeological habitat zones'

Using this principle, the methods of discovery and record, the means of survival and present state of the monument, and its future management, are all approached through a biological perspective as if the cultural 'thing', the site or artefact, were dynamic if not actually natural. One looks at, records and assesses a burial mound, for example, as if it were a beech tree or even a butterfly. Such a perspective can be adequately justified in the sense that the archaeological site, far from being the static product of just human activity or even of the interaction of Man and Nature, is where the two meet in a dynamic and changing relationship which certainly continues to affect the site in the present. What we can see, record and interpret now is of course very much the result of the interplay between cultural and natural forces but it is, as Chapter 12 will discuss, a dynamic interplay which continues to change.

From N-S, the `archaeological habitat zones`, defined in land-use terms, in which the various man-made features exist are:

T. `Old grassland`, essentially the NNR area of Fyfield and Overton Downs but with significant extensions N across Totterdown (SSSI)

U. `New arable`, created out of `old grassland` from the 1940s onwards, particularly in the 1950s-60s.

V. `Old arable`, essentially the former 'open fields' and old enclosures of the estates/manors/parishes of Overton and Fyfield on the south-facing slopes of the north side of the Kennet valley.

W. `Bottom-lands`, the valley bottom of largely uncultivated meadow, water-meadows, of the flood-plain and immediately above it where the extant settlements lie with gardens, closes and (some old) enclosures.

X. `Old arable`, as V. *above* but on the north-facing slopes on the south side of the Kennet valley

Y. `New arable`, as U. *above* but south of the R. Kennet

Z. Woodland, essentially West Woods and adjacent patches of woodland and clearings therein

Although this zoning developed internally to the project, it co-incides almost exactly with the model independently generated and illustrated by Evans *et al.* 1993, *fig. 42*.

We propose to present ten 'windows' into the landscape, selected on a topographical and land-use basis to provide a range of archaeology/ecology/land-use history across the study area. We cannot be comprehensive; but the 'windows', following the 'archaeological habitat zones' *above*, are intended to be representative. They are non-random samples, carefully selected to illustrate, it is believed fairly, the nature and variety of this particular current and historical landscape

The 'windows' are as follows:

Zone T: old grassland:

1. **Overton Down North/Totterdown:** rough grazing dominated by sarsen fields in a boundary zone
2. **Wroughton Mead:** old grassland with enclosures and 'marginal' settlements

3: **Overton Down (ODXI/Expt. Earthwork area)**: old, unenclosed grassland

Zone T/U/V: interface area between different land uses

4. **Down Barn area**: old grassland, enclosures, and both old and new arable at communication node

Zone U: new arable:

5. **Manton Down**: formerly old grassland, converted to arable 1950s on

Zone V: old arable

6. **Overton Hill-Headlands**: North Field of West Overton

Zone W: 'bottom-lands'

7. **Kennet Valley**: flood-plain and immediately above, meadow, waterworks, communication corridor and settlement zone

Zone W/X: equivalent to Down Barn area above no. 4

8. **Lockeridge Dene**: old settlement area with old grassland on old route, with old arable adjacent

Zone Y/Z: new arable/woodland

9. **Shaw**: forest edge settlement area, a boundary zone with old grassland, clearings and new arable

Zone Z: woodland

10. **West Woods**: forest, with mosaic of plantations and clearings

Introduction

Analysis and discussion of the air photographic map of Fyfield and Overton Downs in the preceding chapter has also acted as a useful introduction to much of the archaeology of part of our study area. Air photography has played a crucial role in the project *ab initio*: indeed it was St. Joseph's NX 76 (PI. 7.00) which started us off (*above* p. 00). Various air photographic transcriptions and area maps were used over the years but the RCHM map itself was produced very late in our research. It came as a summation, not as a research base, and has inevitably been interpreted with a certain amount of being wise after the event. Taking air photographic data into account, we now turn nevertheless to all types of evidence from the whole of our study area.

Nevertheless, at one level, the study area is almost totally undistinguished. No famous person has ever been born there, lived there or done anything there; nothing of particular note has ever happened there. Fyfield and Overton do not contain any major house or other architectural monument; they contain only one really outstanding archaeological monument, East Wansdyke which runs through them (Clark 19**). Their archaeological resources might well appear to be limited to a famous (air photograph of a)

prehistoric field system, one or two quite well-known archaeological sites and a lot of bits and pieces. The presumably ceremonial, late Neolithic/EBA complex centred on 'The Sanctuary' on Overton (or Seven Barrow) Hill lies on its western boundary (Pollard 1992). Well-known megalithic tombs lie to the west - East and West Kennet long barrows (Piggott 1963) - and, immediately outside the Fyfield boundary, to the

** Some of the individual sites and monuments are noted here for the first time, as far as we know, but rather than give them new numbers tagged on to the morphological categorisation used in our first interim report (Bowen and Fowler 1962), we use new SMR numbers (indicated by an asterisk *) provided by Wilts. CC SMR. Many of the sites have acquired a respectable bibliographical pedigree of different numbers over the last century, conveniently brought together more or less up to the point in time when the Fyfield project began in VCH (1957). We therefore quote the main reference and the VCH number where available, since that gives an easily accessible entree to the site bibliography; and, in addition, we cite subsequent authoritative references or at least, if there are several post-1957, we provide the main one, usually the latest, which gives others between VCH (1957) and the 1980/90s. The whole is laid out in a Concordance, below p. 00-00).*

east at Devil's Den in Clatford Bottom (Fowler and Sharp 1990, 00); less well-known ones occur in the area in West Woods and above Lockeridge (*below p. 00*).

There are dozens of round barrows (*above p. 00*), including some unusual Roman ones and some with secondary Anglo-Saxon burials, and the famous 'Celtic' fields of Fyfield Down. Several deserted settlements of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date are scattered across the landscape, a minor local industry once exploited the sarsen stones, a local geological freak (King 1968), and an unexceptional scatter of archaeological finds have been recorded (VCH 1957). In other words, the area seems, at the one level, fairly typical of southern England. In a sense, one hopes that in a correct view, for representativeness, typicality, would validate this study.

At another level, since the main thrust of the study is historical and processual rather than antiquarian or site-orientated, all that is irrelevant. Whether the area is glamorous, monumentally well-endowed, famous by nature or with fame thrust upon it, matters only in the power of such factors, like every other type of evidence, to inform. That is, relevance lies in an ability to answer our and posterity's questions about this area and indeed to suggest what questions to ask about its various pasts and how they have contributed to the present state of affairs. We see no merit, therefore, in inflating this text with a long descriptive catalogue, site by site and find by find, of all the field evidence now assembled from the study area. In itself it means nothing.

The data are listed in Appendix I, and are used as appropriate rather than being routinely repeated for the sake of completeness here. This approach allows this chapter to be more of a discussion than might otherwise have been the case. It employs the 'case-study technique' within the generalities, taking a number of areas as 'windows' to look at the two parishes in some detail in various places. The ten 'windows' are carefully chosen, partly for their own intrinsic interest and partly because, collectively, they demonstrate a range of variety in terms of geology, soils and aspect within the topography of this *locale* (fig. **). This approach obviously continues the policy of this monograph in being selective, and being open about being selective, rather than trying - and failing, - to be even-handed overall and throughout under the pretence of being 'scientific' or objective.

The primary archaeological evidence in the field was acquired using conventional methods, mainly fieldwork integrated with research in library, archive and air photographs. Perhaps it is worth restating, if only as a curiosity in the professionalised archaeology of the 1990s, that virtually all this 'work' was carried out personally over the decades as a truly amateur pursuit. It was fitfully pursued during visits to the area or record offices for other purposes; it was fitted in at weekends and over holiday times, sometimes with a few friends and/or students - the normal way of 'doing archaeology' in the 1960s and, despite major changes (Fowler 1972, Rahtz 197?), for some purposes during the 1970s too. This activity preceded, ran concurrent with, and continued long after, the set-piece excavations (Chaps. 4-7 *below*); the purpose and location of all those excavations followed directly from questions raised by the fieldwork. It is also true to note, however, that the excavations themselves sharpened up perceptions and stimulated some very specific further fieldwork and air photography.

That said, the following is a brief description and discussion of the field archaeology of our study area as recorded between 1959 and 1996. Our first trawl of landscape and library around 1960 'exploded' the then known amount of archaeology in our study area (Bowen and Fowler 1962). In similar fashion, our own inventory and knowledge have been enormously enlarged in assembling and assessing 'new' information, much of it other people's, during the preparation of this text. Now, this record of time passing has itself become of product of time. At a rather late stage in the writing-up, never mind the active research phase of the project, we have absorbed a mass of data from both RCHM (fig. 00) and the Wiltshire County Council SMR. We have also found some key information on aerial photographs not previously seen: some taken by O.G.S.Crawford in June, 1924, and some taken by RCHM in March, 1995.

Indeed, the analysis preceding, and the production of, draft text of this monograph in embryo proved especially fruitful in the field during 1995-6 though such was not, of course, the intention. In practice, however, various

matters needed to be checked or amplified, not least in the light of changes over nearly four decades, and with the resource lying there in the field it seemed remiss not to revisit, at least in a highly restrained way. The drought of 1995 was particularly helpful to us archaeologically e.g. Featherstone 1995. It and the long, hard winter of 1995-6 combined with very heavy grazing on the downs throughout the period, resulted in ideal ground conditions for archaeological fieldwork. Though our purpose was retrospective, not discovery, new material was almost inadvertently acquired e.g. a previously unnoted 'megalithic' barrow on Manton Down (fig. 3.00), an extremely slight angular boundary bank and ditch defining the Overton Cow Down of the early C19 on Fyfield Down, and the pattern of 'Celtic' fields underlying Wroughton Mead (fig. 3.00). Subdued winter vegetation plus understorey clearance produced the long-needed information about what was actually in Wroughton Copse (fig. 3.00), hitherto merely looked at as a jungle from outside; while off the Chalk, ideal vegetational and light conditions in the valley allowed confirmation of the lines of both the Roman road west from Fyfield and an early C19 road south from the ford into West Overton village (*below* p. 00; fig. 3.00). A hitherto unnoticed 'clapper bridge' across a leat and carrying a foot path across the Kennet floodplain was photographed a few minutes later (Pl. 0.00). It affords particular pleasure to record the result of checking two specific points on Overton Down, revisited on 18 February, 1996, under the gaze of a hundred hostile sheep. The grass would have graced a billiard table, allowing denial of the three-sided 'enclosure E, F' and confirmation of 'enclosure GHIJ' as postulated by Crawford (Crawford and Keiller 1928, Pl. XIX, fig. 24). His air photograph was one of our starting points in 1959; so, like Mr Prufrock, we ended our search where we began (Eliot ****, 00).

We can be certain of one thing. As has been the case over the last 35 years, so even within the next decade will the factual basis for understanding and managing the archaeology of our area change yet again. Furthermore, it would be no surprise were that change to be drastic, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Looking back at the methodology and its implementation from the mid-1990s, it can be seen that, initially unconsciously but latterly with awareness, coverage of the study area has varied widely but fairly consistently. This dimension to the results of fieldwork can be recognised as a human factor - the way in which the investigators worked, - emergent in the later C20 rather than anything to do with the original formation or long-term survival of the actual archaeology.

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Some miscellaneous field notes relict from old chap 3: to be dumped from text if not usable anywhere:

651, 652, 653: a cluster of three round barrows clumped roughly N-S across the SE slope of a spur formed along the N slopes of the Kennet Valley by the intrusion of Piggledean northwards (*above* p.00). 653 has been completely excavated (Swanton *forthcoming*; and hopefully we can summarise the results [are they in WAM?] and x-reference to its environmental evidence in Chap. 8)

125(a), 125b (new number): a pair of round barrows on the end of the spur formed by Pickledean at c175 m, 125a (formerly 125 on SMR) and the more easterly of the two with 125b c 100 m to the W. The latter was discovered in freshly-ploughed (and more deeply ploughed?) land in Sept., 1994, its presence marked by a slight rise in the ploughsoil but more particularly by several large sarsen stones which had newly been brought to the surface.

The Villages and the Houses and their dating: perhaps a general point here in chap 1, with decision to be made whether to include anything in more detail in chaps 9 and 10 as appropriate (if used at all?)

General points:

Maybe there's a case for a NOTE, either at the end of Ch 3 or as an Appendix, on LBs and their location since Barker's supposedly definitive article is seriously wrong on two antiquarian ones, one of which (Manton) comes into a window and the other is in an area which has yet to be dealt with properly (one para) in the RCHM map commentary (Chap 2)? pjf 4/4/96.:

Notes:

`Old Chapel long barrow` and adjacent Wick Farm earthwork enclosure: the ref. is Barker, C.T., `The long mounds of the Avebury Region`, WAM 79, 1984, 17 re `Old Chapel long barrow`, quoting Stukeley: get the original ref - see BLO GM 231, fo. 224 or fo. 10 ; and Piggott WAM 147, 62: as illus. p. 17 in WAM 79, Stukeley shows the megaliths of the lb. AND the bank and ditch of the Wick Farm e/w enclosure. REST OF SITE TO BE DESCRIBED HERE, FLAGGING IT AS EX-FYFIELD PH. but within study area i.e. the DMV and the E/w enclosure

Later: there`s more to this than meets the eye and perhaps others have realised. Barker`s illus. from Stukely clearly shows the lb. outside, and probably partly overlaid by, a bank and ditch. There is no reason to doubt this is the Wick Farm/Old Chapel earthwork shown on OS and visited by pjf as early as 1960 (note on old 6 in. map); nor to doubt Stukely`s own description that the lb lay immediately NW of the e/w. This would mean that the view in his illus. is of the NW corner of the e/w from the W. I have not yet seen Stukely`s orig. or the repro. of fol. 224 by Piggott in WAM 1947 , but Long`s (1862, pl. IV) repro. of Stukely`s `Abury, in its original state...` clearly shows in a perspective view `Temple downs` top right bearing a rectangular enclosure with a trapezoid-shaped area delineated on its NW corner: presumably a

schematic indication of Old Chapel/the lb, which are illustrated in detail elsewhere in his book (NB for elsewhere in Ch. 3 and 9: it also shows `Roydon` and `The Hakpen hill`).

It is incredible therefore that everyone -OS, VCH/LVG, Barker etc. - places the lb about 0.5 km` away **SOUTH WEST of `Old Chapel` at SU 12907290.** The clue might well be that Stuk. apparently refers to the `two great stone works upon it` i.e. upon Temple Down. Does this mean 2 lbs? That, at any rate is what we seem to have: the one in the literature at 129729, seen as the barrow illus. by Stuk. but not actually anywhere near it; and the one by the Old Chapel e/w at NGR which Stuk. actually described and illustrated (tho` I just wonder if by any chance he could have been illustrating the remains of a Templar chapel?)

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