

FARNCOMBE DOWN BARROW, BERKSHIRE

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SUMMARY

This report describes the excavation of a bulldozed bell-barrow. It was 60-70 ft. across inside a ditch of 110 ft. internal diameter. There was a burnt area in the middle, but no evidence of an interment or of robbing. A central turf-stack 28 ft. in diameter was supported by a revetment of 90 stake-holes in single, double or treble arcs. It was covered by clay and chalk cappings. In the mound were flints and sherds of Neolithic and Beaker date and some of Collared Urns. There was a scatter of Roman pottery and some evidence of Roman ploughing.

Introduction

The excavation was arranged by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Works, and took place during four weeks in September and October, 1958.¹ The barrow had been bulldozed down to a height of 2 ft. in 1957. Resources did not allow a total excavation; the central area was cleared and radial sections were dug to section the ditch at four points.

The Site (fig. 1 Location Plan)

The site is on the Middle Chalk of the Berkshire Downs, in the parish of Lambourn, close to the Wilts.-Berks. border near Baydon. It is 2,000 ft. west of Windmill Farm (N.G. Ref. SU 302781), and lies just below the 600 ft. contour on the north upper slope of a small dry valley. There is another barrow in this area further to the west (shown as "tumulus" in fig. 1); between the two there is a large ditch of uncertain date.²

¹ I should like to thank the following for their help—Dr. Isobel Smith, for her report on the prehistoric pottery; L. V. Grinsell, for his advice; Paul Ashbee, for his advice; D. E. Bracey, the owner, for allowing the excavation; L. Biek, of the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, for scientific advice; Lawrence Butler and Deirdre McLaverty, for their help in the excavation; Owen Meyrick, for advice, and for his help in

the excavation; Dr. M. P. Kerney, for his report on the Mollusca; Miss J. E. King for her report on the bones and J. F. Levy for his report on the charcoal.

The finds and records have been deposited in Newbury Museum.

² See O. G. S. Crawford *Archaeology in the Field*, p. 111, Fig. 16.

The barrow was recorded by L. V. Grinsell,¹ who visited it in 1934. He described it then as "Fine bowl-barrow 22 paces across and 8 ft. high, hollow in the centre, with no visible ditch". No known excavation is recorded, and the present excavation showed that if any had ever taken place, it did not penetrate to the lower part of the mound. The hollow in the centre seen by Grinsell may have been due to settlement or sinkage, to an unfinished earlier dig, or perhaps to the robbing of a secondary burial (a human bone was found in the bulldozed spoil, p. 24). A local resident told me however, that it was the local custom to grow marrows on the top of the mound, and this may account for the hollow. The barrow was not scheduled and was bulldozed in ignorance of its importance. This destruction was reported to the Ministry by Miss Turner of Oxford. The bulldozed barrow looked like a ploughed barrow of similar type.²

The barrow was excavated by radial trenches; the centre point chosen ("grid centre") (C) was found not to correspond with the barrow centre; the spreading of the barrow had obscured its position; the true centre was rather further to the south. The centre from which the ditch appears to have been laid out does not correspond with the apparent centre of the stake-circles; there was no evidence of any ancient peg-hole for the measurement of either.³ The radial trenches demonstrated that there was a central turf stack and stake-holes; the central area was then dug in quadrants QA-QD and extended outwards as far as time allowed; the original ground surface, clearly burnt in places, was exposed over the whole central area, then removed to uncover the weathered chalk.⁴ Finally this was removed over an area sufficiently large to ensure that no concealed grave-pit remained undiscovered.

The rest of the barrow would be worth excavating, if an opportunity arose in the future; there may be further features on the original ground surface associated with the barrow; and the excavation has yielded pottery of Neolithic and Bronze Age types in sufficient quantity to justify the expectation that there are early habitation sites nearby; traces of these may survive under the barrow, even though they may have been totally destroyed by ploughing or natural chalk erosion elsewhere on the Down. Finally the ditch should be cleared to provide possible dating and other evidence; and an area outside the ditch should be examined to see if there are any external features, such as cemeteries of flat graves. There is too, the possibility of an eccentrically placed primary interment, or of secondary interments.

*Stratification*⁵ (fig. 8, Section of Control Pillar)

The natural chalk was found in a disintegrated condition; bedded chalk lay at about 4 ft. below the base of the barrow in the central area; above it was a thick layer of compact pale chalk "mud" and small weathered chalk pieces (layer 7); this was capped by pale buff chalky material (layer 6), which was an intermediate layer between the weathered 7 and the buried soil G. In the central area G was only

¹ *B.A.J.* xl, Part 1, 1936, p. 51.

² For a discussion of this, see P. Ashbee, *The Bronze Age Round Barrow in Britain*, (Phoenix 1960), fig. 5, p. 28 and p. 29.

³ Ashbee, *op. cit.* p. 63.

⁴ Except for a control pillar which was retained until the end of the excavation. (Section fig. 8, shown on plan fig. 3).

⁵ Samples were taken of soils and other materials: see pp. 19 to 20.

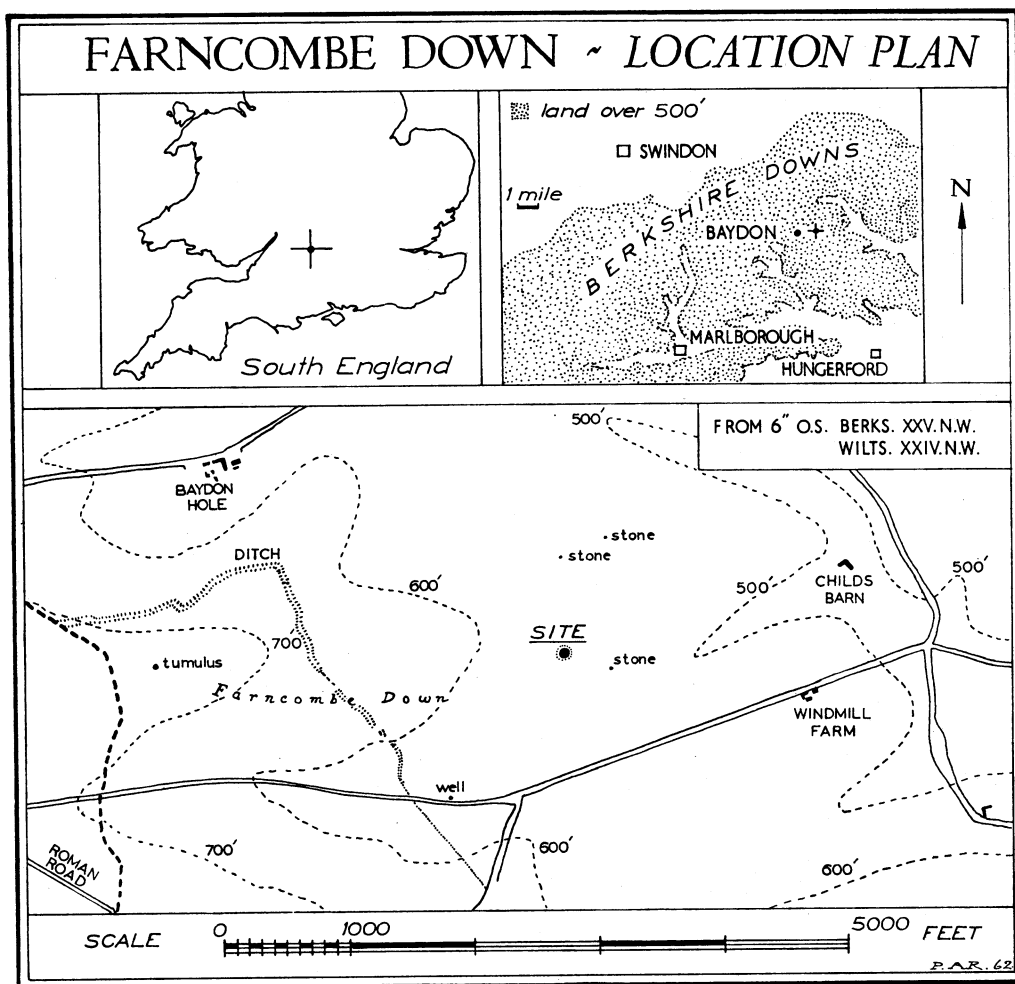


Fig. 1. Based on the Ordnance Map by permission of the Director General

covered by the turf stack (F) and by plough soil; further out under the edges of the mound G was overlaid by the clay and chalk capping (D and C) of the barrow (Sections fig. 4). Beyond the mound on the berm, G is absent, and the chalk is covered directly by weathering layers, a pre-bulldozing soil cover, and bulldozer spoil; the ditch sections were variable in filling.

The Buried Soil (G)

The buried soil (G) consisted of dark red-brown, slightly gritty leathery soil, in which were a few sherds including Beaker (p. 16) and bone fragments (p. 24). The mollusca found in G suggest that the site of the barrow had previously been occupied by grassland interspersed with scrub (p. 23). Layer G was much disturbed by animals (plan, fig. 3).

The Burnt Area (5) (plan, fig. 3)

The burnt area (5) lay outside the turf stack, and became clearly defined only when layer G had been removed; it was almost certainly of earlier date than the barrow, and may be a feature associated with pre-barrow settlement in the area. It consisted of an area of loose friable brown burnt soil, with some charcoal flecks and many "fire-shattered" flints; to north and east layer G was charcoal flecked; all this material is contained *within* layer G; there was no cut-away of the natural below, nor any burnt flints or charcoal on the surface of G. On the south side of 5 layer G and the surface of the natural were riddled with small animal burrows, filled with fine grey soil which may be derived from the charcoal of 5; the burrows were apparently earlier than the stake-holes, which in this area contained some red-brown soil, clearly cutting the fine grey soil. There were no sherds associated with 5.

The "Burnt Floor" (plan, fig. 3 and pl. I)

The burnt floor was the burnt surface of layer G. In places the soil was burnt red, in other places black, to a depth of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (plan, fig. 3) and over the greater part of the central area there was a variable scatter of bluish wood ash and charcoal flecking on the surface of layer G associated with this burning. There was a small amount of chalk and flint gravel trodden into the burnt or ash-flecked surface. Near the centre was a concentration of larger pieces of oak charcoal lying as shown on the plan; one piece was embedded in the ash flecked layer, another was embedded in layer G proper.

The burnt floor may represent the site of a cremation or ritual fire, though no burnt bone was found. 4 might have been the nucleus of the pyre. An alternative explanation, perhaps more likely, is that the burning was of scrub cleared from the barrow area.¹

No interment was found in the burnt floor or on its surface, nor had the lower parts of the central area been disturbed by previous excavations; there were large areas of animal disturbance (badger, p. 24) but no material such as pottery or human or unburnt bone was found in their filling to suggest that they had destroyed an interment. There remain several possibilities; that the interment was so far from central that it lay outside the area excavated; that it was in the upper destroyed part of the barrow;² that it was removed soon after burial by dismantling the turf stack (see later); or that the barrow was a "cenotaph" for someone whose body was lost or buried elsewhere. An interment of this period (see later) is most likely to have been by cremation; the burnt floor is consistent with this, but may have been only the result of a "token" cremation. The burnt floor was cut by the stake-holes; a few of these (see plan) had charcoal in their fillings; one (shown on plan) had charcoal flecks over the fill, but this was probably fortuitous.

The Turf-stack (layer F) (see p. 21)

The turf-stack (layer F) consisted of turves agglomerated into a brown leathery soil, with lines of buff chalk grit and gravel with occasional pieces of clay, surviving

¹ cf. Ashbee, *op. cit.*, p. 56, for a discussion on such burnt areas.

² A human radius was found in the bulldozed spoil (p. 24); this may have come from an intrusive burial.

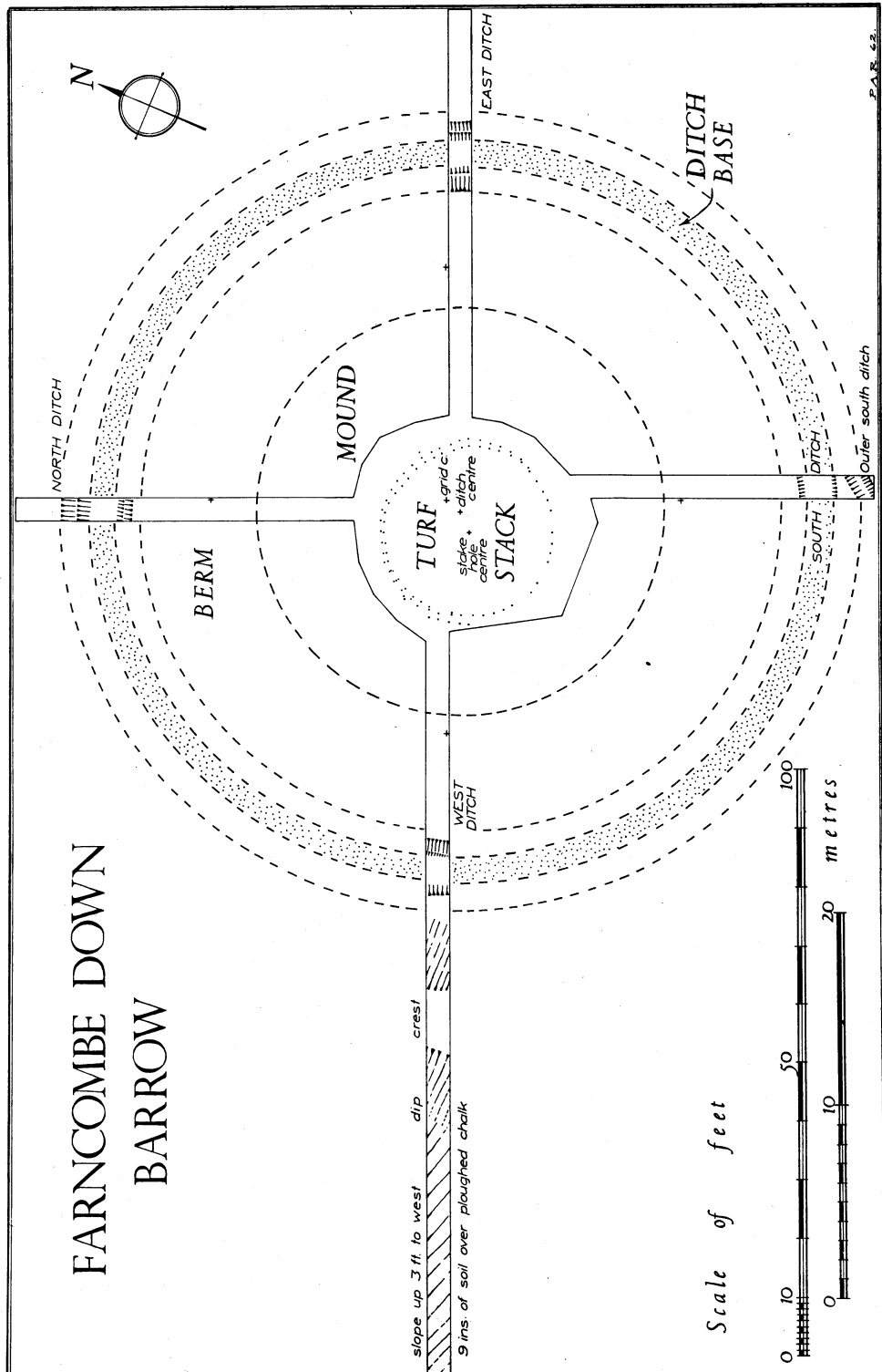


Fig. 2.

to a height of 2 ft. (see fig. 8, control pillar, for a detailed section); in places the soil was darker and charcoal flecked, and in these there were some sherds including Collared Urn (p. 17); in other parts of the turf-stack were sherds, flints and fragments of animal bone (p. 24). In layer F were orange "thin-iron pan" lines (sections, fig. 4); in places (as in section of control pillar) the "pan" line extended diagonally through layers of different materials in layer F. It was the continuity of these lines that established beyond doubt that the turf stack had not been disturbed since the pan lines formed. (p. 22).

Layer F consisted entirely of the same materials as layer G with the addition of a very small amount of clay (presumably of similar derivation to layer D below), and some dark soil, which probably represents some occupation in the area from which it was obtained. There seems no reason to doubt that layer F was turf and topsoil stripped from the area outside the mound of the barrow, that is from the area of the berm and ditch, and possibly from beyond. There is evidence to suggest that the turves were piled with grass down (p. 21) (see pl. IIIb).

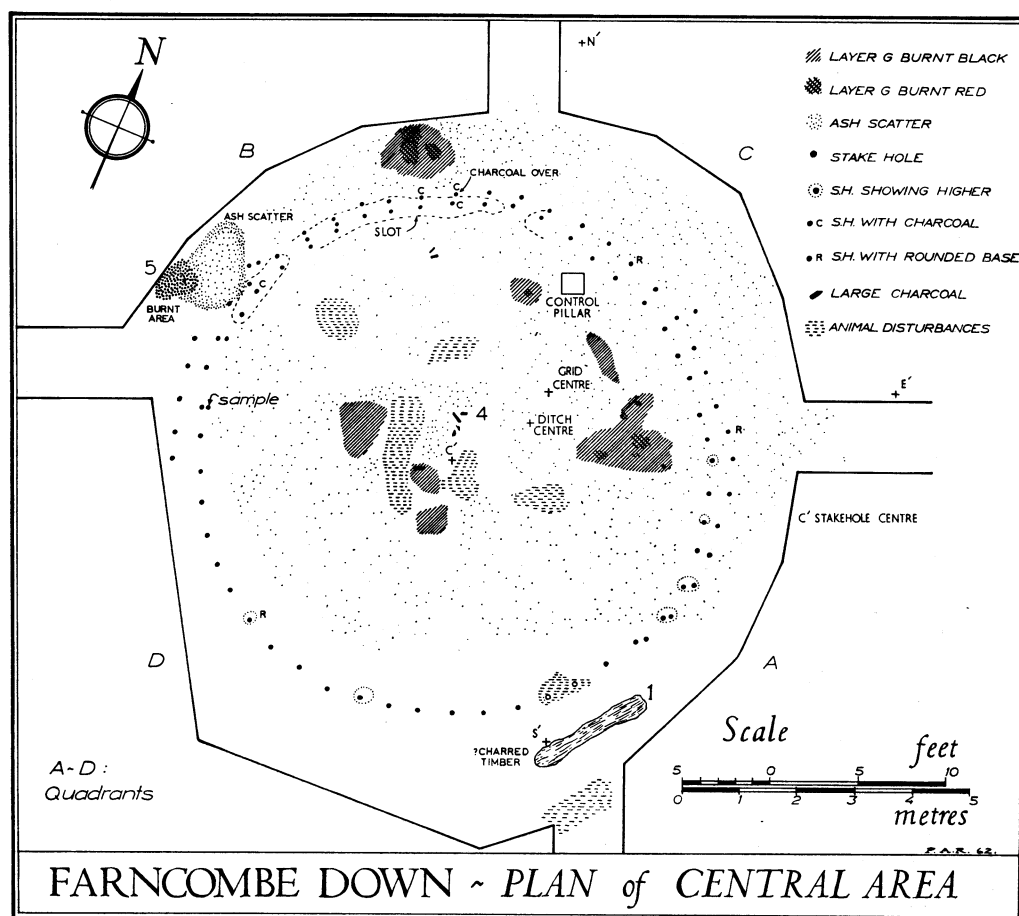


Fig. 3.

The outer edges of the turf-stack were almost vertical (Sections, fig. 4) and coincided with an annular band of loose soil 2-4 in. wide (3), and which separated the stack from layer D. When this was examined carefully by paring back a prepared section, it was observed that there were very loose pockets of soil with some air space which extended downwards into *stake-holes*. These loose pockets were clearly the spaces left (pl. IV) where stakes had decayed *in situ*, and demonstrated that the stakes were in position when the barrow was built; they indicate a *revetment* for the turf-stack, possibly reinforced by some wattling or hurdling woven between stakes, as suggested in the reconstruction sketch¹ (fig. 7). The stake-holes were traced in the original ground surface layer G around the turf-stack, even where the annular band of loose soil was not clear;² on the north and west sides of the turf-stack the band continued down into a shallow intermittent *gully or slot* in layer G a foot or more across and up to 3 in. deep (pl. II); the stake-holes were identified in the base of this. In the gully, and to a lesser extent in the upper part of the annular band, were concentrations of small rodent bones; the gully itself may have been formed by small animals; they may have found that the softest area in the mound in which to burrow was the annular band.

The stake-holes were 88 in number, to which must be added two assumed to have existed on the south-east side where their estimated position was entirely obscured by an animal burrow.

The stake-holes were usually at intervals of 2 ft. on the circumferences of several different circles (fig. 5) but all lay within circles of 28-33 ft. in diameter. In the southern third of the circle there was a single line lying approximately on the circumference of a circle c. 28½ ft. in diameter; the centre of this is shown on the plan as *stake-hole centre*. The circles on whose circumferences the other stake-holes lay were set out from slightly different centres, and in the remaining two-thirds of the circle the stake-hole arcs were usually double and occasionally triple; the stake-holes in each of these arcs lie in most cases roughly on the same radii.

The arc of single stake-holes on the south side does not continue as either of the double or triple arcs; if the east end of single arc is projected to the north, for instance, its course lies between the double arcs on that side; this evidence might suggest that all the stake-holes are likely to have been contemporary, rather than that either of the double or triple arcs were replacements or additions to an original single circle. The inference is that a single line of stake-holes was sufficient on the south side, but that a double or triple line was needed elsewhere; yet it is precisely on the south side, where there is a down slope, that the maximum support to the turf-stack would be necessary; the depths of the holes (see below) are broadly similar in all arcs, except that those on the outer-arc on the north-west side are shallower than the inner arc.

The stratification however suggests that the inner and outer arcs were *not* contemporary. The north, east and west sections (fig. 4) demonstrate a relationship that was observed in many places around the corresponding sides of the turf-stack.

¹ Or possibly as a delineation of the area to be covered by the turf stack.

² As on the south side (south section, fig. 4). Here the turf stack had evidently spread down the slope slightly under its own weight.

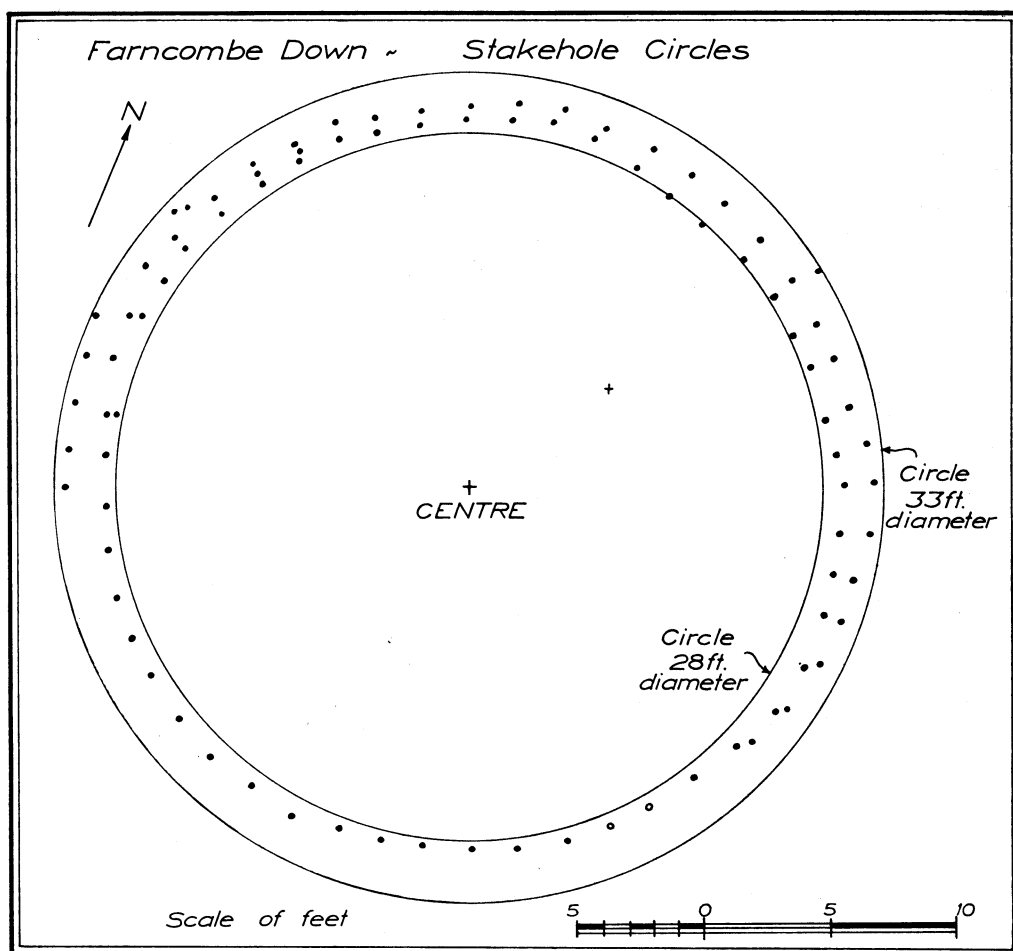


Fig. 5.

Here the loose annular band was confined to the *inner arc* of stake-holes; the turf-stack did not in fact extend to the outer arc; in those places some gritty soil similar to that of the turf-stack (layer E) covered the outer stake-holes; they did not extend upwards through layer E, and were only found when it was removed. Moreover, the clayey capping of the barrow (layer D) lay close to the edge of the turf-stack, sealing layer E and the outer arcs. It would appear from this evidence that it was only the inner arcs (not on a single circle) that carried the stake-holes of the final revetment; there may indeed have been some remodelling of the turf-stack, perhaps following collapse; this might account for some turf-stack material (layer E) being dropped over the abandoned stake-holes of the outer arc; the outer stake-holes on the north-west side are not so deep as the inner ones.

The stake-holes were usually found when the surface of layer G was cleared; over half appeared as empty holes; this was particularly so in the case of the inner arcs, though many of those in the outer arcs were also empty. When the whole central

area had been stripped to chalk, each stake-hole was sectioned vertically; it was seen that even those which had been found with some soil in the upper part of the filling, were largely empty in the lower part; all had some loose fine soil in the lower few inches of the filling and a few contained charcoal flecks (see above, p. 4). The stakes had been *driven* into the chalk, leaving holes that were now 2-3 in. in diameter;¹ the sides of the holes were very smooth (pl. IV). They had clearly been *pointed*; most holes tapered down to a rather blunted point, but a few (R on plan) were round-based; in each case this was seen to have been caused by an obstruction such as a flint or piece of hard chalk.

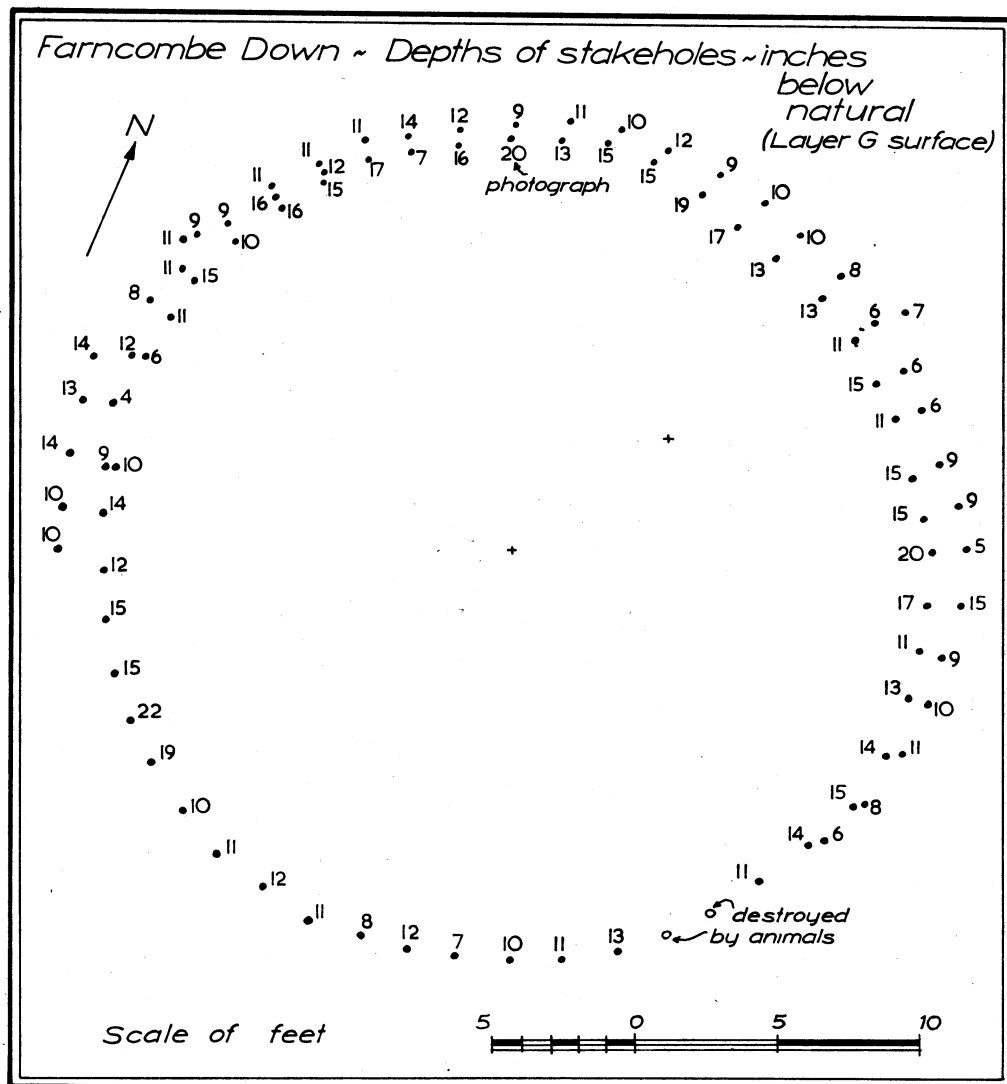


Fig. 6.

¹ Ashbee suggests that this is about the maximum size that could be driven into hard material, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

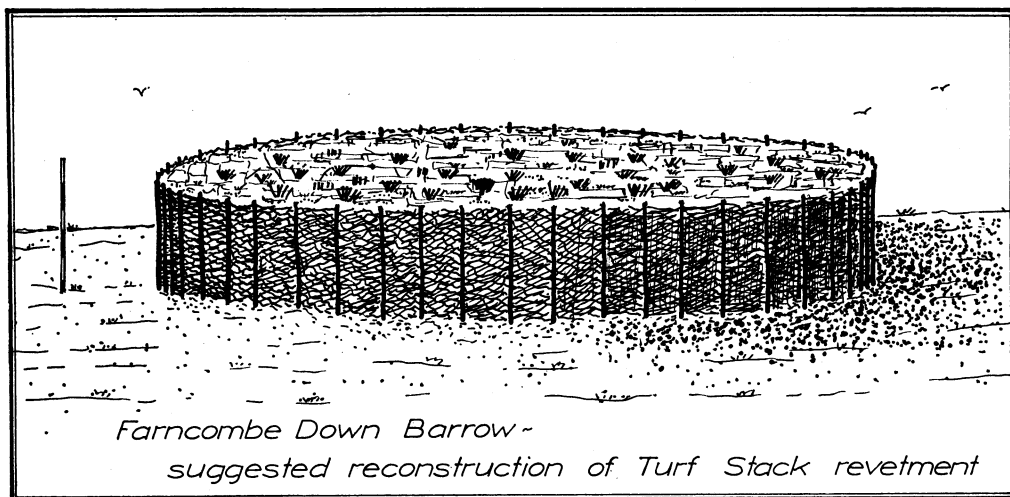


Fig. 7.

The *depths* of the stake-holes, below the surface of layer G, are shown in fig. 6. They range from 4–22 in. (a 20 in. one is shown in pl. IV). The average of the 88 surviving examples is 11·8 in., and most (63) were between 9 and 15 in.; 11 were more than 15 in., and 14 less. There is a significant difference in depths between the stake-holes of inner and outer arcs on the north-west side. The average depth of 20 inner holes here was 14·8 in., while the average of the corresponding outer 20 holes was 8·9 in.

The original height of the turf-stack is uncertain; in the reconstruction sketch in fig. 7 it is shown as about 4 ft. high; if this is correct, then the stakes would have been between $4\frac{1}{2}$ and 6 ft. long. The interpretation of the stake-holes as a revetment for the turf-stack is based on the continuance upwards of at least some of the stake-holes, and on the near-vertical edges of the turf-stack itself. There seems to be no question of any of the stake-holes being part of a structure earlier than the turf-stack, such as a mortuary house; although some of the outer stake-holes could be stratigraphically earlier than the turf-stack, they form no coherent pattern by themselves, and are so similar to the inner stake-holes that it seems certain that they were associated with the turf-stack in some way, probably as a revetment which proved to be insufficient and was replaced, or rebuilt when the interment was removed.

The *rest of the barrow mound* consisted of two main layers, clay and weathered chalk debris (D), and chalk rubble (C). Layer D consisted mostly of buff-orange clay, with some admixture of chalky soil, chalk and flint gravel and grit, patches of black soil, burnt clay and charcoal, sherds (p. 14), animal bone (p. 24) and flints (p. 17). The clay was presumably derived from areas of hillwash outside the barrow area—none of the cuttings showed any of it *in situ*.¹ The black soil and occupation

¹ There could have been some over the chalk on the south side ditch area, where erosion has destroyed at least 2 ft. of the surface; but it was clearly absent

from the central area, where the buried soil (G) is preserved intact.

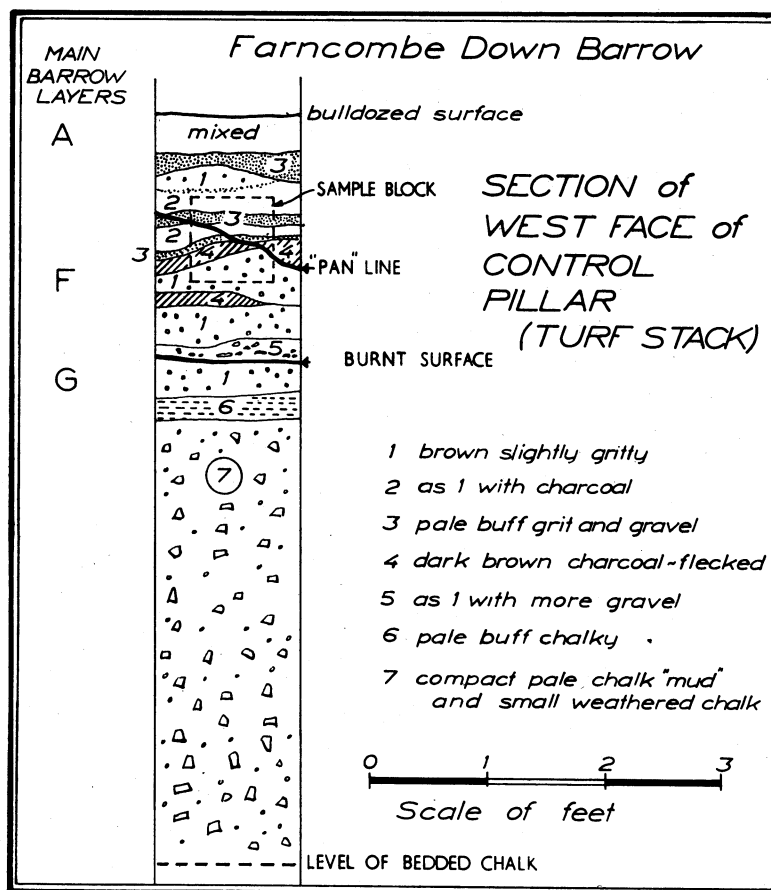


Fig. 8.

debris may be deliberate inclusions, but are more likely to be fortuitous material scraped up from hearth or house-sites in the area from which layer D was obtained;¹ a Beaker sherd was found in one of the black soil patches.

At the base of layer D on the south side, but not lying directly on layer G, was what appeared to be the remains of a charred timber, a concentration of charcoal and soil, with no wood structure visible (1 on plan, fig. 3 and south section, fig. 4). This may have been derived from a burnt structure or from tree-clearance for the barrow; it could have been placed in this position as a revetment for layer D on the sloping south side.

Layer C contained little but heavy and light chalk rubble and mud except on the south side, where its lower part was more mixed; it was presumably largely if not wholly derived from the digging of the ditch. Its outer edges coincided with the limit of the buried soil layer G.² This was also probably the limit of the mound, which would leave a *berm* of some 20 ft. between the mound and the ditch.

¹ cf. Ashbee, *op. cit.*, p. 55, for a discussion on "hearth-sweepings" incorporated in barrows.

² Except on the south side, where a large animal burrow had destroyed the edge of G.

The Berm

The absence of layer G in the berm area suggests that the turf and topsoil from it had been stripped to provide material for part or whole of the turf-stack; this is indeed likely, but the evidence is not conclusive on this point; subsequent natural erosion and ploughing may have destroyed the original soil; the humus could be redeposited by worm-action, and would be represented in the sections by layer B, at a higher level; this is the pre-bulldozing soil cover.¹

There is no evidence of chalk erosion on the north and west upslope sides,² where the level of natural chalk outside the mound is similar to that under the mound; on the south (downslope) side, there has been considerable erosion of the berm and ditch area; but the shallowness of the soil profile suggests that this is wholly the result of ploughing, rather than of chemical erosion; on the east side (slight downslope) the chalk level outside was also slightly lowered. The berm was covered with a mixed buff chalky soil, thick where it had accumulated on the upslope north and west sides of the mound, thin on the east, and almost absent on the downslope south side; between this and layer B, to the west and north, and over the east ditch, was a layer of gravel and brown soil, which might represent a former plough-soil; the thickness of layer B suggests that such plough-soil could be of some antiquity.

The Ditch

The ditch was sectioned in four places, called the west, east, north and south ditches. It was originally four feet deep from the surface of the undisturbed chalk, and flat-based, $4\frac{1}{2}$ -5 ft. wide at the base, and probably steeper-sided than the present profiles would suggest. There were no indications of antler pick marks on the sides, and the base was smooth. In each ditch section was a thick "primary silt" of weathered chalk rubble and mud, from the disintegration of the shoulders of the ditch; above this were layers of buff chalky soil and dark soil as shown on the sections.³ The dark soil layer contained Roman pottery and showed that the ditch was half-silted at the most, and must have been very clearly defined, in Roman times and possibly much later. The ditch was subsequently levelled off and quite masked by soil accumulation, almost certainly the result of ploughing in Roman times or later.

There was some *Roman occupation* in the area; 10 Roman sherds were found in layers A and B, and (three) in the west ditch⁴ with charcoal and animal bone. The outer south ditch (see plan, fig. 2, and south section, fig. 4) may be of this or later date. There was Roman occupation near Baydon; Mr. I. D. Margary's Roman road 41b (Cirencester to Speen) passes close by (see fig. 1), sherds and other Roman features were found on nearby Row Down.⁵

¹ Layer A is a mixture of materials; the surface of layer B on the east side was disturbed by Home Guard pits, in which were bullets, tin cans and a bedstead.

² The natural chalk under a barrow or other earthwork is protected from natural chemical erosion and sometimes survives to a height of $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. above the chalk outside; see Ashbee, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³ The south ditch was severely truncated by ploughing.

⁴ Two weathered scraps of Samian, half of the base of a sandy red footring and everted and cavetto grey cooking pot rims; the three sherds from the West Ditch were a sherd of dark smooth grey ware (shown on section fig. 4) and two sherds of gritty grey ware, with buff surfaces.

⁵ See "Two mounds on Row Down, Berks." *B.A.J.* 58, pp. 20-32.

The Dating

The dating of the barrow can only be determined by the date of the latest sherds in the make-up of the barrow mound, in the absence of interments. Dr. Isobel Smith suggests that the latest sherds are those of Collared Urns, which suggests an Early to Middle Bronze Age date; this is consistent with the form of the barrow, and it is likely that it belonged to the Wessex Culture.

Conclusion

There is no known parallel for stake-hole circles inside barrows which were associated with the revetment of a turf-stack. Ashbee lists stake-hole circles of similar superficial appearance in plan,¹ but he suggests that where they were *in* the mound, they were probably mortuary huts or houses; and that they were only likely to be for revetment where they lay on the *periphery* of the mound;² nevertheless he does describe one case where the stake-holes "continued up into the body of the mound and were equidistant at a considerable height, suggesting a horizontal tie between the stakes"; the barrow "appeared to have been built over a standing hurdle structure".³

The occurrence of sherds, flints, animal bone, and "hearth" material has been noted on many occasions;⁴ the material in this case, if we may judge by its apparent range of date, is not *all* contemporary with the barrow, and is therefore clearly not the result of "ritual" deposition by the barrow builders; the range suggests Neolithic, Beaker and Bronze Age occupation in the vicinity. The sherds were not weathered, even the Neolithic sherds were perfectly fresh; this suggests that their place of origin had not been under cultivation before the barrow was built, a conclusion borne out by the evidence of the mollusca (p. 23).

The absence of a burial in the central area suggests that this was a "cenotaph"⁵ barrow, though alternative possibilities are mentioned above (p. 4).

THE POTTERY AND FLINTS

ISOBEL SMITH

The fortunate circumstance that much pottery had been preserved in and under the barrow mound affords a welcome contribution to the somewhat scanty representation of Neolithic and Bronze Age domestic wares in this part of Berkshire. Nearly all the main varieties of Neolithic and Beaker wares are identifiable, as well as Collared urns that are probably contemporary with the barrow itself. The range of types shows that successive communities had occupied the immediate vicinity over a period of a thousand years or so, from c.2500 to c.1400 B.C.

¹ Ashbee, *op. cit.*, chap. 5, p. 64, fig. 22, type C2.

² Ashbee, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³ Ashbee, *op. cit.*, p. 62, citing Sheeplays 293', in the Vale of Glamorgan, *Ant. J.* XXI, 98-114; see also Sir Cyril Fox, *Life and Death in the Bronze Age*, (1959), 129-143.

⁴ Ashbee, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁵ For other cenotaph barrows, see W. Greenwell, *British Barrows*, (1877), 27, 28n, 202, 301; 340; L. V. Grinsell, *Ancient Burial-Mounds of England*, 2nd edn. (1953), 159, 218; L. V. Grinsell, *Dorset Barrows* (1959), 21, 50, 79.

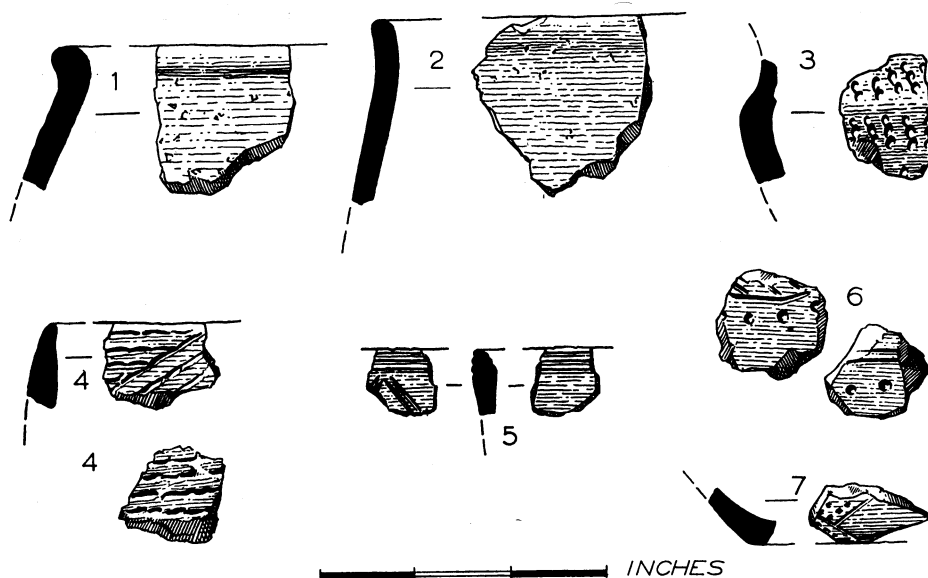


Fig. 9. Farncombe Down. Windmill Hill, Peterborough and Rinyo-Clacton ware

Windmill Hill Ware, fig. 9: 1, 2. (Layers A and F)

Nine or ten different pots are represented by small sherds, most of them more or less heavily weathered. All but two are featureless wall sherds. Colours vary from black to brown; one from the burnt area has been reddened by this fire. Seven pieces are gritted with particles of calcined flint, five with flint and a variable admixture of sand, and one with sand only. The flint particles are 3 to 5 mm. in diameter and sparsely distributed as a rule. The fabrics can all be matched closely in the causewayed enclosure on Windmill Hill, including one distinctive variety. This is soft and extremely fine-grained in texture, with added flint. It can be exactly reproduced with material from the deposits of 'brickearth' which occur in localized patches on the Marlborough Downs. The two rim sherds are of good quality black ware, hard and well finished. The rolled rim, No. 1, may have had widely spaced shallow vertical strokes over its surface, but is too abraded for certainty on this point. There are no indications of ornament on No. 2.

Peterborough Ware, fig. 9: 3 (Layer D)

A fragment from the shoulder of a bowl of (probably) Mortlake type is the sole representative of this group, with the possible exception of a small undecorated piece with abundant coarse flint grits. The decoration above and below the shoulder has been made by short lengths of twisted cord; the typical flaky fabric contains flint and sand.

Rinyo-Clacton Ware, fig. 9: 4-7. (Layers B + F, A, A and A)

The sherds (all illustrated) represent four pots. Numbers 4 and 5 are of black, flaky ware, with no visible added grits; numbers 6 and 7 are brown and have the

soft, fine-grained texture noted in some of the Windmill Hill ware. Decoration in numbers 5, 6 and 7 is by incision with a sharp point, supplemented by impressed dots and pin-pricks. In No. 4 the design has apparently been made by a fingernail or implement of similar shape.

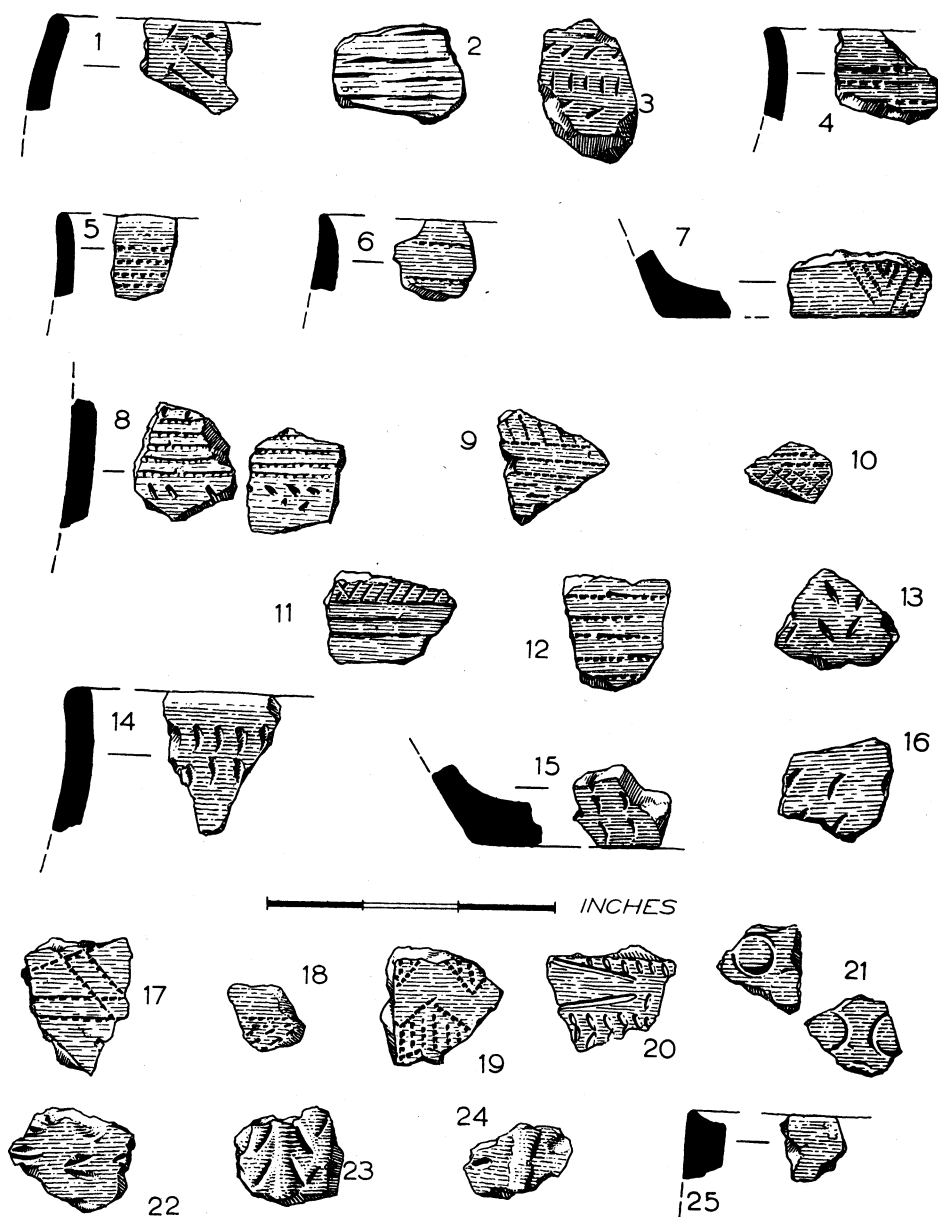


Fig. 10. Farncombe Down. Beaker ware

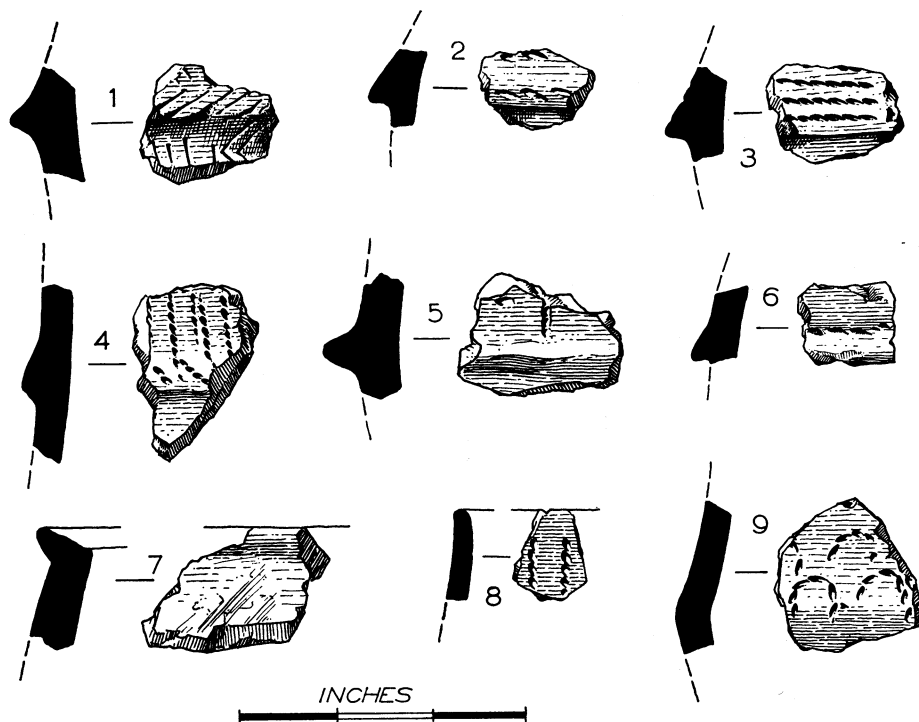


Fig. 11. Farncombe Down. Collared Urn sherds

Bell-beakers, fig. 10: 1-16. (Layers D, B, F, F, F; F, D, D + F, F, A, F, D, F, D, F, F.)

Thirty-five sherds represent a minimum of fourteen Bell-beakers with zoned ornament made with dentate stamps, and a single undecorated rim sherd. In No. 8 (fig. 10) the horizontal zones are bordered, apparently above and below, by rows of single oblique stabs; a second beaker was similarly ornamented. The lines on No. 11 have been made with a thin stamp with very fine teeth. The ware is mostly thin, but many sherds are rather soft and brown or yellowish in colour. Flint grits are minute and sparse. The coarser element is manifested in sherds like fig. 10: 1-3 and 13-16. A few exhibit fingernail impressions (No. 13), but more often the marks have been made with a tool (1-3, 14-16). Between fifteen and eighteen pots of this type are present.

Necked Beakers, fig. 10: 17-24 (Layers G, F, F, G, D + F, A, F, F).

The sherds are somewhat thicker and less well finished than those of the Bell-beakers, and flint grits are more abundant. There are no rims or bases; small wall sherds represent six or seven vessels. Decorative motifs include the bar-chevron (No. 19), reserved triangles or lozenges defined by incisions and plain stamped impressions (No. 20), and impressed circles, 12 mm. in diameter (No. 21). The coarse wares belonging to this group (Nos. 22-24) are rusticated; two have pinched-up ribs. Small wall sherds represent about six pots.

Other Beaker Sherds, fig. 10: 25 (Layer D)

The undecorated rim sherd with concave internal bevel (fig. 10: 25) is in beaker fabric, and may come from a cup or bowl. A further twenty-one plain wall sherds probably belong to the Necked Beakers, as do nine thick, soft, flaky sherds with yellow surfaces which closely resemble the Collared urns in fabric, though they contain no visible fragments of crushed pottery (grog). They are, however, decorated by means of the characteristic dentate stamp; a tenth has a herring-bone pattern made with a short, comb-like tool with four or five pointed teeth. These sherds seem to belong to a phase when beaker potting and firing techniques had been forgotten, but when the decorative traditions still lingered on.

Collared Urns, fig. 11: 1-9 (one was on the buried soil layer G, in Quadrant D, 4 ft. inside stake-hole circle; rest F, D, F, F, F, F, D, F; 7 and 9 were in dark soil patches in the turf stack).

Many of these sherds are quite unweathered, and retain their original slightly waxy surface finish, so that they are probably contemporary with the barrow itself and represent the domestic pottery of its builders. A thick carbonized deposit, presumably a food residue, still adheres to the inner surface of one piece. Yellow and yellowish brown are the predominating colours; cores are black and sometimes flaky. Only two sherds contain visible flint grits; the remainder have been tempered with grog only. A minimum of ten urns is represented by collar and shoulder fragments. Except for No. 1, which bears a herring-bone pattern impressed with the end of a flint flake or similar tool, all the decoration is by twisted cord.

The pottery is too fragmentary to permit an accurate assessment of its relationship to the primary series defined by Longworth.¹ Although a few pieces exhibit single early traits—e.g. the extension of decoration over the neck in No. 1, the (apparently) straight external surfaces of the collars in Nos. 2 and 3, and the simple rim of No. 8—these are quite insufficient to support an early date for the group. A date somewhere in the latter years of the Wessex Culture, around 1400 B.C. would seem appropriate.

Flint Implements, fig. 12: 1-13²

No. 4 alone has a full white patina; the remainder are a mottled blue-grey, except Nos. 6, 11 and 13, which have been made on old surface flints and therefore exhibit areas of white patina as well. One scraper (not illustrated) has been made on a thermal flake.

The most interesting piece is No. 4. This is a flake 72 mm. long, struck so as to have one thick, naturally blunt edge and a sharp one; the distal end has been squared off by secondary retouch. The bulbar surface exhibits patches of the diffuse lustre (represented by fine stipple in the drawing) that is produced by cutting vegetation containing organic silica. The sharp edge has been chipped during use as a knife for reaping corn or, possibly, cutting twigs and leaves for cattle fodder.

¹ Longworth, I.H. "The Origin and Development of the Primary Series in the Collared Urn Tradition in England and Wales." *P.P.S.* XXVII (1961), 263-306.

² Provenances: 1, 3, 5, 10—Layer D, clay capping.
2, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12—Layer F, turf stack.
4, 9, 13—Bulldozed surface.

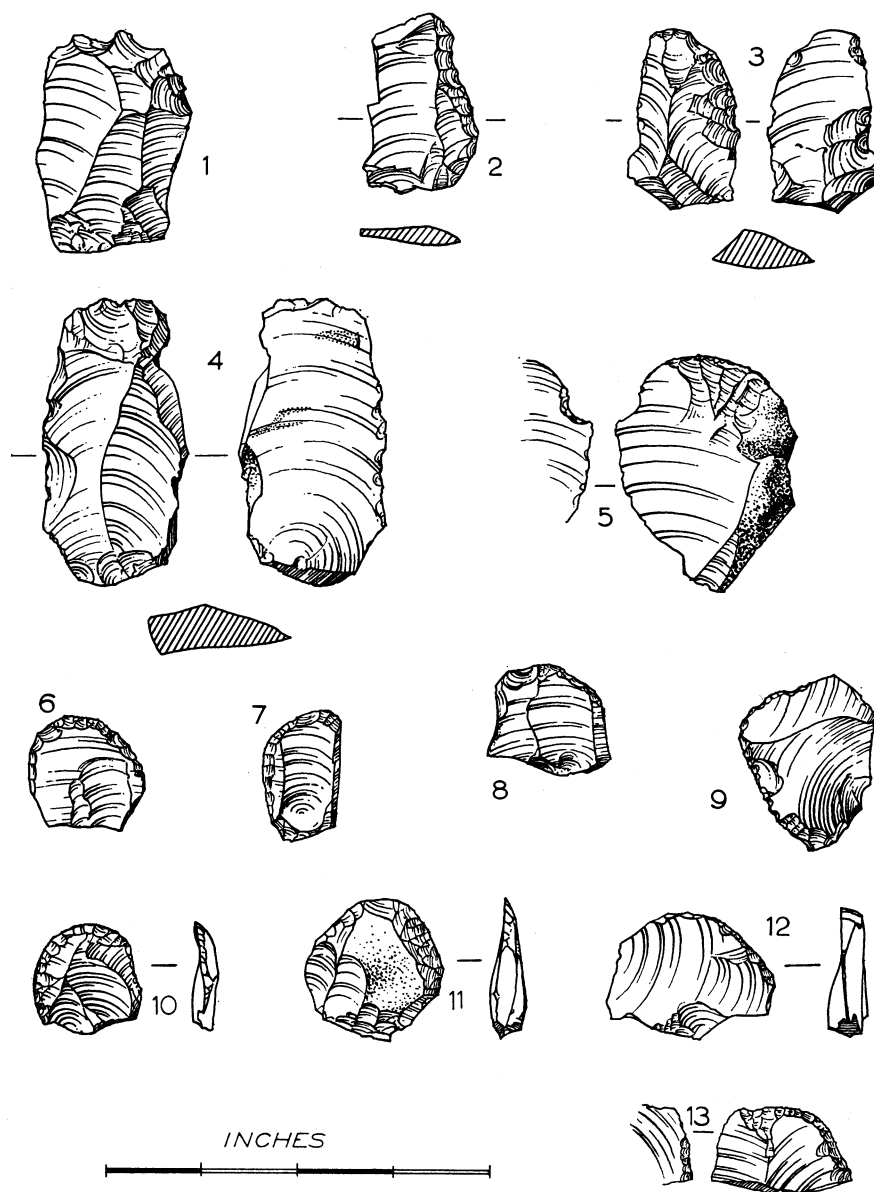


Fig. 12. Farncombe Down. Flint implements

The extension of the lustre to the blunt edge suggests that the tool was not inserted in a handle. Lustrous implements of just this type occur in some numbers in the primary levels of the ditches at Windmill Hill, and No. 4 probably belongs with the sherds of Windmill Hill ware from the barrow.

Nos. 1, 5 and perhaps 8-9, 12-13, seem on the other hand to be attributable to the Late Neolithic occupation represented by the Rinyo-Clacton pottery. No. 1 is a

flake with a blunt projection in the centre of the distal end. The projection has been defined by a pair of notches, each formed by the removal of more than one small flake, and seems to have been the working part of the tool. Although such tools have not been accorded formal classification, they seem to recur quite regularly in Late Neolithic contexts, e.g. in the upper levels of the ditches at Windmill Hill, in the West Kennet Avenue industry and in similar industries elsewhere. The notch worked on the scraper, No. 5, would place this in a similar context. There is nothing very distinctive about the remaining scrapers, Nos. 8, 9, 12, 13, except that two (Nos. 9 and 12) have faceted striking platforms. The presence of this attribute and the absence of features characteristic of Windmill Hill techniques on the one hand and of beaker techniques on the other suggest that these are probably Late Neolithic.

The two small knives (Nos. 2 and 3) and the four small scrapers (Nos. 6, 7, 10, 11) can be attributed with some confidence to the beaker occupation. The dimensions and the shallow invasive secondary working are quite typical, as is the shallow angle of retouch on the scraping edges, e.g. on Nos. 10 and 11.

THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

L. BIEK

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Scope

The site was visited and the significant sections and features were seen *in situ*. Agreed samples, including a block from the control pillar, were taken by the excavator and examined in the Laboratory and by other specialists. Specimens of charcoal and bone were submitted to expert examination.

Geology

The site is marked on the Geological Survey map as lying on Middle Chalk which extends into the dry valley immediately to the south; it is flanked to the north-east, south and west (to within some 200 yards) by higher ground lying on Upper Chalk. A narrow tongue of alluvial gravel trending southwest-northeast indicates that a confluence of streams existed at some time to the south-east of Windmill Farm. An extensive deposit of Clay-with-Flints occurs on the Upper Chalk ridge south of the road. Although the Middle Chalk is softer and less flinty than the Upper Chalk, and occupation might be expected to produce or intensify the kind of 'chalk mud' subsoil which was found, the locality would still benefit from the combination of good drainage and adequate water supply characteristic of the Chalk. The absence of artefacts of stone other than flint is perhaps noteworthy. We are indebted to Mr. S. C. A. Holmes, of the Geological Survey and Museum, for helpful discussion.

Soil

Samples were ignited under oxidising and reducing conditions,¹ and some were also decalcified, graded and refired, at the Ancient Monuments Laboratory by Mr. W. E.

¹ *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, 1958, XXVIII, Part 1, 27.

FARNCOMBE DOWN BARROW, BERKSHIRE

Lee. The results are shown in Table 1 which also indicates other work done on some of the samples that is reported separately below. In the discussion which follows all the evidence is considered together.

Table 1
SOIL SAMPLES AND CHARCOAL

A.M. No.	Ignition		% insol.	Decalcification					Other work	Field descrip.	Site Ref.
	Iron	Organic matter		+10	+20	+40	+80	-80			
8407									charcoal	Burnt surface	G
8408									mollusca	Buried surface (burnt)	G, from 2
8409	Med.	High (in black)								"	-- " --
8410	High (max.)	High med.	90.2	6.8	1.0	0.7	13.4	78.0		Clay	D
8411	Low med.	High.	52.2	0.2	1.0	0.1	57.7	40.9		Gallops humus	Control (c. 50 yds. away)
8412	" "	Med.	50.2	39.7	8.0	13.5	16.3	22.5		Gallops subsoil	— " —
8413	High	High	85.6	3.4	1.1	0.8	83.5	11.1		Dark streaks in 8410	in D
8414	Med.	Med.	52.7	22.9	3.3	21.1	17.4	35.3		Grit in 8410	in D
8415	V. low (min.)	V. low								Below 8416	(7) Control
8416	High	Med.								Stake-hole filling	W side, Fig. 6 (See top of Pl. I) (under pillar) from G down
8417	Low med.	High								Above 8416	Control mixed D+F
8418	" "	Med.								Beside 8416	Control G and below
8419	" "	Low								Stake-hole filling	NNW side 20, top of Fig. 6 (see Pl. IV)
8420									mollusca	Control pillar block	N side see Fig. 8, sample block

Tests on 8408 and 8409 confirmed that the brown (and black) material could be turned into the red, in an oxidising atmosphere, and the brown but not the red into the black in a reducing atmosphere, by firing to about 6–700°C. The “*burnt floor*” (F2) can thus be interpreted in this context, and any visual colour distinction on the surface can probably be safely used to indicate the considerable size and variable nature of the fire. From general considerations of soil profile development, and by internal comparison with “turf stack” material—in all places examined where one could be certain, turves appeared to have been placed surface downwards—the full fossil profile seemed to be present *in situ* under the mound. In any event, the “*buried soil*” (G) is clearly proved to be an unstripped surface by the presence of mollusc shells. Their survival in turn indicates that no significant quantities of decalcifying matter can have reached the buried surface from the body of the mound since burial, and, on the other hand, that this surface is unlikely to have suffered temperatures in excess of 900°C for any length of time. (Its calcareous nature made preservation of pollen grains very improbable, and any that might have been found would not have been stratigraphically reliable owing to worm action.¹ Since in any case adequate ecological information was given by the mollusca the soil was not examined for pollen.)

It is also possible to say with certainty, on this basis, that the bones of any inhumation (let alone cremation) within the excavated area would have persisted, not only at a higher level where one was actually found (though it is considered to be secondary), but also on, in or under the buried surface itself. Although corroborated by the presence in the buried surface of animal bones believed to have been buried with it, this conclusion is in fact quite independent. This is of interest as such preservation cannot always be assumed merely on account of a generally calcareous environment (see Row Down, Scientific Addendum, below), and also in view of the presence of the “clay” (D).

In the event, this “clay” has provided the most intriguing scientific problem on this site. There was no time for an exhaustive field examination but nothing comparable could be found in the present-day—or, indeed, in the fossil—soil profile. The material, though containing only some 10% of acid-soluble matter, is now sufficiently calcareous not to permit the existence of acidic substances in it; although this may not always have been so, any such substances do not appear to have had a significant effect on the underlying material. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how the “clay” could have been *decalcified* to its present state, in the mound, from an originally more calcareous material, especially as the excavator’s view of the stratigraphy postulates that chalk rubble overlay it in the beginning, and possibly for a considerable period and to some depth.

Physical rather than chemical ‘sorting’, of some kind, would therefore seem indicated. Although under certain conditions not impossible, such a process is most unlikely here to have given rise to the quantities and dispositions of “clay” and chalk rubble found, if the original mound were assumed to have consisted of a mixture of the two (possibly equivalent to the “pale buff chalky material” (layer 6)). The most likely explanation involves the use of (naturally) pre-sorted material

¹Dimbleby, G. W. The Overton Down Experimental Earthwork (forthcoming).

brought (by human agency) from outside the immediate area of the excavation. Mr. Holmes suggested that the "clay" might be hillwash and the proximate grading of insolubles does indeed show nearly 80% of the material to consist of fine sand and smaller particles. It is hoped that work in progress may throw further light on its nature and hence its derivation.

Finally, the evidence of iron movement in the mound profile seems noteworthy. The mechanism is obscure but is likely to involve reducing conditions due to (decaying vegetable) organic matter,¹ or carbon dioxide in percolating water, or both. Whatever the process, the visible results are thought to reflect the drainage pattern fairly accurately. The manner in which the pale "pan" lines were seen in section to cut across junctions between different materials suggests that the mound was quite uniformly permeable, and that the "pan" in fact followed the mound surface at a fairly uniform distance.² If this is acceptable then any anomaly, especially if regular, may be regarded as significant. On that basis the dip in the "pan", particularly marked in the north section, would indicate better drainage in the (annular) area immediately below this dip. Such a pattern might reflect certain details in the construction of the turf stack. If the first stage had been to heap turves up against the inside of the revetment all round, packing them well and at an angle the better to contain the central core, this might have resulted in a preferential drainage channel. The "pan" is not directly connected with any 'trampling surfaces' since it does not seem anywhere to lie on anything that had ever been a surface. Its absence from the south section is probably due to the fact that the effects of the general slope completely masked the local drainage pattern here.

If this picture is valid it would imply, as one might expect on other grounds, that the "pan" was formed in the early part of the mound's history, at any rate before the decay of the revetment and the change in drainage pattern which presumably ensued.

THE CHARCOAL (A.M. No. 8407)

J. F. LEVY

Department of Botany, Imperial College

Six fragments were examined, picked at random from the larger-sized material which alone seemed to promise success in identification. The fragments examined were all of oak (*Quercus* sp.).

MOLLUSCA

M. P. KERNEY

Department of Geology, Imperial College

I examined for land Mollusca two rather small samples from this excavation, both from the buried rendsina soil beneath the barrow (layer G).

¹ Findlay, D. C., private communication in a similar context elsewhere.

² *J. Derbys. Arch. Soc.*, 1961. LXXX. 42-3.

Sample A (8408): 3 cm. block of buried soil from base of control pillar. Dry weight 130 gm.

Sample B (8409): 4 cm. block of buried soil from burnt area. Dry weight 275 gm.

	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Pomatias elegans</i> (Müller)	9	11
<i>Carychium tridentatum</i> (Risso)	10	36
<i>Cochlicopa cf. lubrica</i> (Müller)	3	7
<i>Acanthinula aculeata</i> (Müller)	1	2
<i>Vallonia costata</i> (Müller)	44	25
<i>Vallonia excentrica</i> Sterki	17+53	5+32
<i>Ena montana</i> (Draparnaud)	—	1
<i>Marpessa laminata</i> (Montagu)	—	2
<i>Clausilia bidentata</i> (Ström)	2	1
<i>Helicigona lapicida</i> (Linné)	—	1
<i>Arianta arbustorum</i> (Linné)	—	1
<i>Helix (Cepaea) sp.</i>	2	3
<i>Helicella itala</i> (Linné)	—	1
<i>Hygromia hispida</i> (Linné)	3	9
<i>Discus rotundatus</i> (Müller)	1	2
<i>Vitrea cf. contracta</i> (Westerlund)	1	3
<i>Oxychilus cellarius</i> (Müller)	—	1
<i>Retinella pura</i> (Alder)	—	3
<i>Retinella nitidula</i> (Draparnaud)	2	5
<i>Vitrina pellucida</i> (Müller)	1	—
Totals	149	151

N.B. The added numbers in the counts of *Vallonia excentrica* are juveniles or broken apices, almost certainly entirely of this species, since the related species *V. pulchella* does not appear to be present.

The fauna shows that the site of the barrow had previously been occupied by grassland interspersed with scrub. Although there is no reason to regard the two assemblages as other than contemporary, there are certain differences between them. That of sample (A) reflects a more open environment than that of sample (B); in the first, shells of the two dry-loving, grassland species *Vallonia costata* and *Vallonia excentrica* account for 77% of the total assemblage, whilst in sample (B) their percentage is only 41%. Conversely, certain species in sample (B), most notably *Ena montana*, *Marpessa laminata* and *Helicigona lapicida*, would require for their existence at least a local cover of bushy scrub and would not live on an open chalk down. *Ena montana* in particular is a snail which in this country today seems "quite intolerant of cultivation or disturbance" (Boycott, "Distribution and habitats of *Ena montana* in England", *J. Conchol.*, 21 (1939), 153-9).

The species is clearly declining in Britain, although it still lingers in a few widely scattered places on the chalk of this region, the nearest recorded localities being around Ham and Rivar in Wiltshire, about ten miles south of Farncombe Down.

ANIMAL BONES (M.O.W. Ref. 600070)

MISS J. E. KING

British Museum (Natural History)

In layer G (the buried soil under the barrow) were 15 fragments of animal bone; the only identifiable ones likely to be ancient were a metatarsal fragment of *ox*, and a fragment, possibly from the tip of an antler tine of *deer*; the remainder were either too small for identification, or were of *badger* (scapula and fragments of vertebrae) which are likely to be intrusive.

In layer F (the turf stack) was part of the shed antler of *roe deer*.

HUMAN BONE

On the bulldozed surface was the proximal end of an adult radius (J.E.K.).