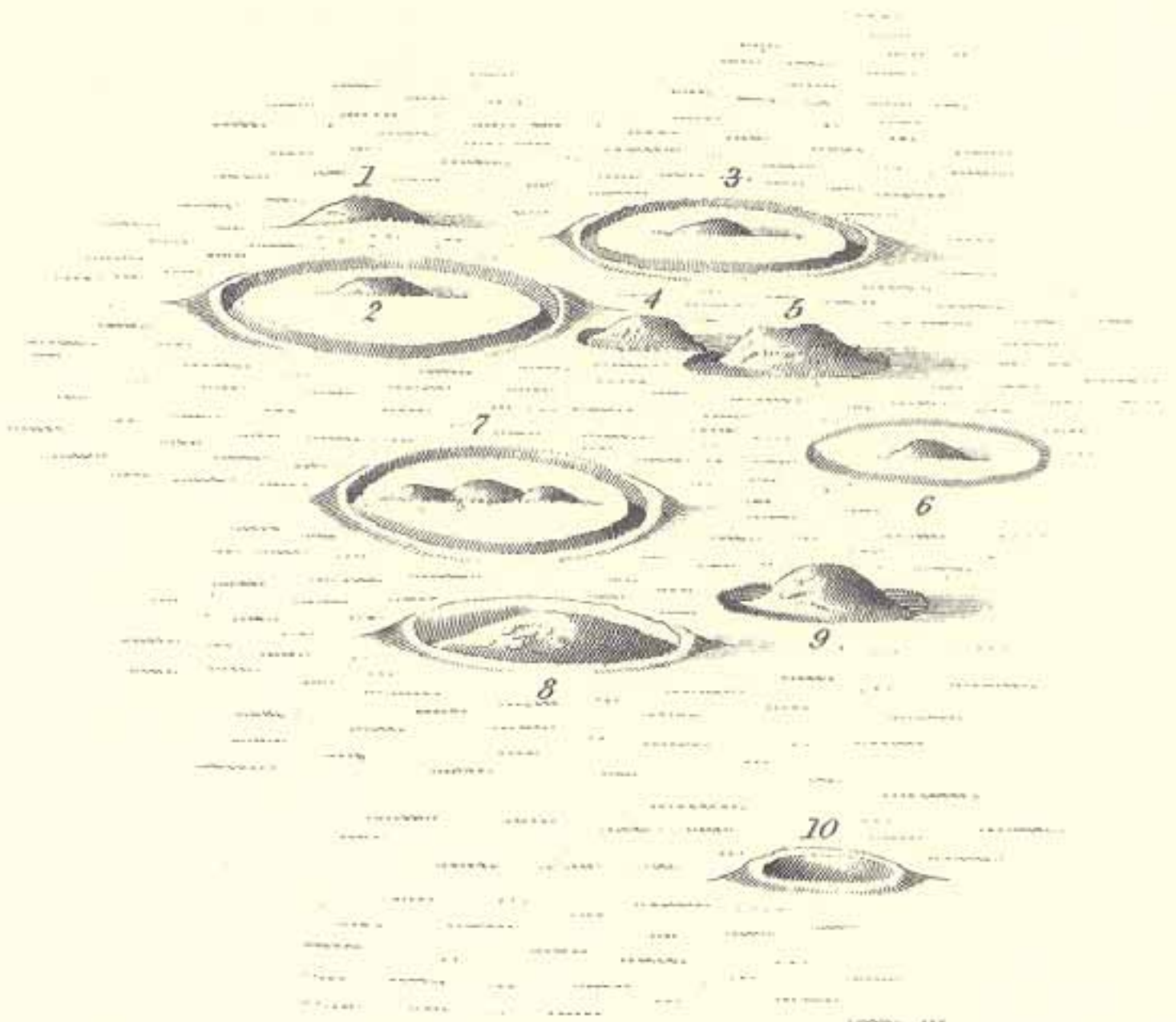


STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE LANDSCAPE PROJECT WILSFORD BARROWS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Mark Bowden



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**STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE
LANDSCAPE PROJECT
WILSFORD BARROWS**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Mark Bowden

NGR: SU 118 398

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SUMMARY

The Wilsford barrow group is one of the least studied of the major cemeteries around Stonehenge. It lies on Wilsford Down overlooking Spring Bottom to the east, partly in woodland and partly in pasture that was under arable during the later 20th century. The group comprises nineteen round barrows of various forms, of which fourteen survive at least partly as earthworks. Most of these mounds were excavated by Cunnington in the early 19th century and a few had been opened by previous antiquarians without record; there has been no significant modern archaeological research until the present survey. It is possible, from the earthwork and aerial photographic evidence coupled with Cunnington's excavation records, to suggest a chronological narrative for the cemetery. Two interments associated with beakers underlie later barrow mounds and represent the earliest recorded activity; a number of inhumations and cremations can be divided into two phases on the basis of associated Early Bronze Age grave goods and this can be linked with elaboration of the barrow structures. Some of the smaller bowl barrows may be of slightly later date. Understanding of the broader landscape history of the site is limited.

CONTRIBUTORS

Survey was undertaken by Elaine Jamieson of Archaeological Survey & Investigation with Kate Barrett, an MSc in Professional Archaeology student on placement from Oxford University. The report has been compiled by Mark Bowden with assistance from Elaine Jamieson, Dave Field, Sharon Bishop (AS&I) and Martyn Barber (Aerial Survey). Figs 1 and 6 were prepared by Deborah Cunliffe (Imaging, Graphics and Survey).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

English Heritage is grateful to Mr Peter Bailey of the Lake Estate for permission to carry out the survey.

ARCHIVE LOCATION

The Archive has been deposited in the National Monuments Record, the public archive of English Heritage, Firefly Avenue, Swindon SN2 2EH

DATE OF SURVEY

Spring 2010

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Front cover: part of the Wilsford barrow group from Philip Crocker's bird's eye view (Hoare 1812, opp 207) showing barrows **63** (10), **64** (9), **64a** (6), **65** (5), **69** (8), **70** (7), **71** (2), **72** (3), **73** (4) and **73a** (1) from the west; the spacing of the barrows is imprecise and this view does not show the overlapping of the disc barrows **70** and **71** that is apparent in the aerial photographs

INTRODUCTION

The Wilsford barrow group lies partly within and partly to the north of a woodland belt near the summit of Wilsford Down, centred at SU 118 398, in Wilsford-cum-Lake parish, Wiltshire (Fig 1). The barrows within the woodland belt are relatively well preserved though damaged to varying degrees by animal burrowing, tree root action and antiquarian excavations. The barrows to the north have been almost entirely, though not quite, levelled by ploughing and other agricultural activities.



Fig 1: Location of the Wilsford barrow group within the Stonehenge WHS

This group is the most southerly of all the barrows depicted by Philip Crocker in the 'Map of Stonehenge and its Environs' (Hoare 1812, opp 170), though the RCHME version of this map (1979, map 2) includes the Lake Down group and several other barrows to the south. The Wilsford group is separated from the Lake Down group by less than 500m and within this narrow gap is an outlier, Wilsford 74 (see Fig 3). The other nearest neighbours are the Lake group (called by Stukeley the 'Prophet Barrows'), about 700m to the west-north-west and another small group (Wilsford 51-54) on Wilsford Down to the north-west at a similar distance. All of these barrows lie on the same block of elevated downland. To the north are the Normanton Down barrows, the main group of which is separated from the Wilsford group by about 1.5km and by a substantial dry valley; however, the nearest of the Normanton Down barrows, Wilsford 55, lies only 600m from the Wilsford group. Interestingly, the high ridge to the east of Wilsford Down, between Spring Bottom and the River Avon, has very few recorded barrows.

Survey of the Wilsford barrows was undertaken in Spring 2010 by English Heritage as part of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) Landscape Project; this survey meets the aims of the Stonehenge Research Framework (Darvill 2005, 108-20, 129) and Aim 6 of the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan (Young *et al*/2009, 113), to improve understanding of the WHS necessary for its appropriate management. The Wilsford barrow group was selected for investigation because it is one of the more poorly recorded and understood barrow groups in the WHS.

Several different numbering systems have been applied to these barrows at various times in the past. The parish numbering system applied by Grinsell (1957), following Goddard (1913), has been followed in this report, as this is the most widely used and recognised system. A concordance of the various numbering systems is given in Table 2.

GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY AND LAND-USE

Wilsford Down, a slight ridge at about 100m OD extending from the high ground to the west and dropping into Spring Bottom to the east and north, consists of Cretaceous Upper Chalk. Stonehenge itself is just visible to the north, beyond Normanton Down. Lake Down to the south is at a marginally lower elevation but the ground beyond rises to Rox Hill at 132m OD. The soils on the ridge top are humic rendzinas of the Icknield Association while those on the lower slopes are brown rendzinas of the Andover 1 Association to the north and Andover 2 Association to the south and east (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 6 1983); these soils are light and well drained and therefore easily cultivated but also easily exhausted under traditional manuring regimes.

In the medieval period Wilsford manor was held by the Verdun and subsequently the Talbot families but it changed hands many times from the 18th century onwards. In the 14th century a 3-course crop rotation was practiced; this and other evidence suggests an open field system but the amalgamation of the tenancies would have been easy and there is no Inclosure Award for the parish (Watts 1962, 215-18).

In Sir Richard Colt Hoare's time this was a 'verdant down' (Hoare 1812, 207), no doubt grazed by sheep as it had probably been for much of its history. However, according to the Doidge brothers' map of Lake, surveyed in 1752 (copy of 1811, Wiltshire Heritage Centre 1552/2/2/4H), the part of West Field immediately to the west of the barrows had been under the plough in the mid-18th century. Shortly after Hoare's time the area around the barrows was brought under cultivation as part of the arable lands of Wilsford, named 'Waste (or West) Field North' on the tithe map (RCHME 1979, map 3). By the time of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 25" map, 1878, the belt of woodland had been planted. This was one of a number of shelter-belt plantations in Wilsford in the 19th century; increase in scrub as a result of decline in grazing had also been occurring in the parish (Watts 1962, 219). Superficially the landscape immediately around the barrows has changed very little since the time of the OS 1st edition. However, a pig farm was established in the 1930s and the area to the north of the plantation was under arable thereafter (Grinsell 1957, 220; 1978, 40-1). Historic aerial photographs show that arable farming continued throughout most of the later 20th century and that a fence and track was laid across barrows 71 and 72 after the Second World War and remained in use for some decades.

Aerial photographs taken around 1990 (e.g. NMR SU 1139/40 (NMR 4594/31) 30 March 1990) indicate that many trees within the plantation had been uprooted, possibly as a result of the 1987 hurricane or the gales of January 1990; this is consistent with a number of tree throw holes noted during this survey.

Currently this part of the Down is used for grazing, mainly for horses, and woodland for rearing game birds. Planting of box within the wood, as cover for game birds, has largely obscured barrows 60, 61 and 62 and the areas between them (see Fig 6); barrow 62 in particular is densely covered and could not be surveyed.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

This barrow group seems, superficially, to have escaped serious attention by early antiquarians; however, Hoare records that eight of the barrows had been 'opened' before the 19th century (1812, 207-9). Several of the barrows were excavated by William Cunnington in the early years of the 19th century (*ibid*); details of his discoveries are given below under the individual barrow descriptions. Barrow **60** was possibly re-excavated by John Thurnam (Wiltshire SMR SU 13 NW 613 – *see below*). Sherds described as being of the Late Bronze Age were found on the surface of Barrow **58** by RS Newall (Grinsell 1957, 212) but no other finds have been recorded with the possible exception of Mortlake ware fragments which are supposed to have come from the barrow group (but *see below*); none of the surface collection areas of the early 1980s Stonehenge Environs Project (Richards 1990) lay close to the Wilsford barrows. Depiction of the barrows on Ordnance Survey maps was revised following a visit by AN King, OS Archaeology Division Field Investigator, on 1st May 1972 (Fig 2). There have been no modern excavations and the barrows, being largely under trees, have not benefitted as a whole from aerial survey, though significant features of some of the barrows to the north of the plantation have been revealed (*see below*); no geophysical surveys have been undertaken.

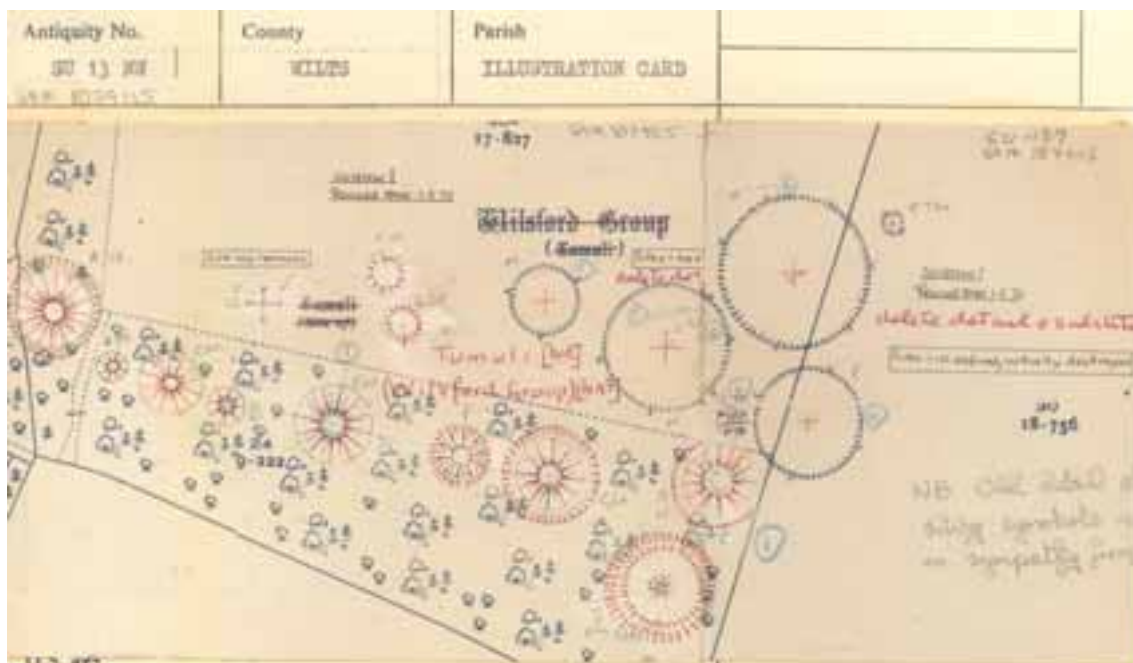


Fig 2: Ordnance Survey Antiquity Model SU 13 NW 1, 1st May 1972 (NMR GAM 1079115). The missing portion of the pencil comment at bottom right has been cut off the original and therefore remains enigmatic.

DESCRIPTION

The Wilsford barrow group is situated on an east-facing slope, dropping towards Spring Bottom, between 90m and 105m OD. The group has a roughly east-west trend; barrows **58-64** are in alignment but otherwise there is no neat linear arrangement as is seen in some neighbouring barrow groups. The barrows are generally well spaced so there are no observable chronological relationships between individual barrows; however, historic aerial photographs show that disc barrows **70, 71** and possibly **72** did in fact impinge on each other (e.g. 106G/UK942/4002 19 Oct 1945 and Fig 3). Nine of the barrows are within the plantation and are comparatively well preserved. Those to the north are in pasture but have been under arable at various times in the 20th century (*see above*); in 1972 the OS Investigator commented that 'though traceable they have been virtually destroyed' (NMR SU 13 NW 1) but surprisingly some of their mounds still survive as visible earthworks – their ditches and other cut features, of course, survive below the surface and are visible on aerial photographs. Even in the area of barrows **70, 71** and **73a** there are some undulations in the ground surface, too indistinct to survey; these barrows were crossed by a track for many years after the Second World War. Barrow Wilsford 74 lies about 140m to the south, between this group and the Lake Down barrow group; it was recorded as part of the latter (Komar 2010, 15) though it could equally be regarded as an outlier of the Wilsford group (Fig 3).

The barrows within the woodland

Barrow 58

Barrow **58** is a large bell barrow with a narrow sloping berm and surrounding ditch. The mound is up to 3.3m high and the ditch survives up to 0.4m deep. The barrow has suffered some erosion and damage: Grinsell noted that in the 1950s the berm was 'becoming overspread by tree-roots and burrowing' (1957, 212) and it is now distinguishable only on the south and west sides of the mound; there is some disturbance from burrowing animals and tree throws on the east and south of the mound and ditch.

This is Hoare's barrow no 18, which he described as 'the monarch of this group, both as to its superior size, as well as contents' (1812, 209). Cunnington discovered a primary burial, the skeleton of a 'very tall and stout man' with head to the south-east, 'on the floor', accompanied by a perforated dolerite battleaxe, a bronze flanged chisel or axe, a bone 'tube', grooved whetstone, boar's tusk, a bronze object with attached chain links and other items (*ibid*, pl 29; Fig 5).

Barrow 59

This small bowl barrow comprises a mound 0.8m high with no sign of a surrounding ditch. There is some damage to the south-eastern edge of the mound, possibly as the result of a tree throw. Hoare noted that this barrow (his no 17) had been previously opened (1812, 209).

Barrow 60

This substantial bowl barrow, 1.8m high, was recorded as ditched by the OS Investigator in 1972 (NMR SU 13 NW 1) and by Grinsell (1978, 42); there is now no sign of a ditch but the barrow is heavily overgrown.

This barrow (Hoare's no 16) was excavated by Cunnington: he found a primary burial, head to north-west, and a secondary cremation with two whetstones, bone objects, worked flints and a bronze dagger (Hoare 1812, 209, pl 28). According to the Wiltshire SMR (SU 13 NW 613) this barrow was re-excavated by Thurnam; though Thurnam makes no mention of this, he does mention the skull from this barrow, which had become part of his collection (1869, 543 ; Devizes Museum Library, Thurnam Skull Cat. 97). Cunnington habitually re-buried the human remains that he found and Thurnam elsewhere obtained skulls from Cunnington's excavations by re-excavating the barrows.

Barrow 61

A small bowl barrow, 1.2m high, survives though largely covered by dense vegetation; there is no sign of a surrounding ditch. This barrow was excavated by Cunnington without result (Hoare 1812, 208-9).

Barrow 62

Barrow 62 is a large bowl barrow but is now covered by dense vegetation and could not be properly surveyed; its approximate circumference is shown on the plan (Fig 6). It survives to a height of approximately 1.8m and has suffered considerable damage by burrowing animals. In 1972 the OS Investigator recorded 'faint indications of a ditch' (NMR SU 13 NW 1) but this is not currently visible.

Cunnington's excavation of this barrow (Hoare's no 13) uncovered a primary burial of a 'stout' young man in a shallow chalk-cut grave, head to south-east, and accompanied by a beaker (Hoare 1812, 208, pl 28).

Barrow 63

This is the only pond barrow in the group. It consists of a depression, 0.8m deep, surrounded by a bank up to 0.4m high. In the centre of the depression is a circular hollow with a small mound of material to the south-west; there are no recorded excavations into this barrow and it is possible that the hollow is the result of a tree throw, though it does not strongly resemble a typical tree throw hole.

Barrow 64

Barrow 64 is a large bowl barrow with surrounding ditch visible around its southern and western sides. The mound is up to about 1.5m high and the ditch a maximum of 0.4m deep. There is a clear and regular break of slope around the western side of the mound, suggesting the possibility of more than one phase of construction.

In this barrow (Hoare's no 9) Cunnington found a primary cremation in an oval chalk-cut pit covered with a cairn of flints; with the cremated bones were a small flanged bronze axe, and a bone pin and ring; immediately above the pit was the skeleton of a dog (Hoare 1812, 208, pl 28; Thomas 1954, 320).

Barrow 64a

This disc barrow lies at the south-eastern extremity of the group. It comprises a central mound, 0.5m high, surrounded by a ditch 0.2m deep and, surviving around the southern half of the monument, an external bank up to 0.2m high. The mound is slightly offset to the north-west of centre and there was possibly a second mound to the south-east (Grinsell 1978, 41) but of this there is now no sign. The ditch is slightly shallower in the north-western quadrant.

Hoare recorded that this barrow had been previously opened (1812, 208).

Barrow 65

This is a large bowl barrow with a mound approximately 2.2m high. There are traces of a surrounding ditch, about 0.1m deep, on the western side but the proximity of the plantation fence to north and east has presumably masked the ditch there. There is a regular break of slope, even amounting to a slight ledge, around the western side of the mound, suggesting the possibility that there is more than one phase of construction. The top of the mound and its skirts to west and south-east have been damaged by tree throws.

Cunnington's excavation of this barrow (Hoare's no 5) recovered an interment (probably secondary) of burnt bones on the 'floor', beside a circular 'cist', or chalk-cut pit, which contained another deposit of burnt bones in an urn (an enlarged food vessel); a second, oval, pit contained burnt bones and the partly melted remains of a bronze dagger (Hoare calls it a 'spear-head' but this is his usual term for a dagger) (1812, 207-8, pl 28). Hoare commented on the 'discovery of three interments within so short a space' and speculated that this might have been a family sepulchre and that other burials might remain to be discovered (*ibid*, 208).

The barrows to the north of the woodland

Barrow 66

This disc barrow was on ground 'covered with pigsties 1930-40, since then under arable' (Grinsell 1957, 220). Twenty years later Grinsell described it as 'almost levelled' (1978, 41); it is now completely levelled but aerial photographs (e.g. OS 70 067/079-080 3 May 1970) show some detail, including the central mound; other photographs show the presence of a possible central hollow and two concentric ring ditches with accompanying banks, suggesting more than one phase of building (e.g. NMR SU 1239/7-10 (CAP LK77080) 22 Apr 1953; NMR SU 1139/13 (930/41-2) 12 May 1976). The overall diameter is 45.6m.

This was Hoare's barrow no 14; he said that it had 'experienced a prior investigation' (1812, 208) so Cunnington did not excavate it.

Barrow 67

This bowl barrow survives as a very slight mound, no more than 0.2m high, despite having been under the plough in the 20th century (Grinsell 1957, 199). It does not show particularly clearly on any aerial photographs, suggesting that it may not have been

ditched. The diameter, recorded by Grinsell as '15 paces', is now spread to approximately 22m. It was Hoare's no 12; he described it as a 'wide and low' barrow (1812, 208). Cunnington's excavation recovered a primary skeleton, with its head to the east, 10ft (3m) below the ground surface; this burial was unaccompanied by any grave goods but a fragment of antler and some charcoal were found above it at a depth of about 6ft (1.8m) (Hoare 1812, 208).

Barrow 68

This bowl barrow also survives as a slight oval mound of similar dimensions to barrow 67. Grinsell commented that aerial photographs suggest that this barrow had a wide ditch (1978, 41) and later photographs (e.g. NMR SU 1139/45 (4497/13) 30 March 1990) also show a broad external bank but, of course, no trace of these features is visible on the ground. The overall diameter is 28.5m. Hoare described it (his no 11), like barrow 67, as a 'wide and low' barrow (1812, 208); it had been previously opened. He commented that 'scattered relicts seemed to indicate two interments having taken place within it, cremation, and the skeleton' (ibid); this suggests either that the excavation of this barrow had taken place very shortly before Cunnington arrived and that the remains were lying on the surface or that the remains were found by re-excavating the barrow; Hoare is not explicit.

Barrow 69

This barrow had been almost obliterated by ploughing in the mid 20th century, though Grinsell recorded the mound as still 1ft (0.3m) high (1957, 224); it had been completely levelled by ploughing twenty years later (Grinsell 1978, 41). No trace remains on the surface but aerial photographs (e.g. NMR SU 1239/7-10 (CAP LK77080) 22 Apr 1953) show a central mound surrounded by a broad ditch and external bank. The overall diameter was 35m. Hoare called it (his no 8) a 'Druid barrow of the second class' and noted that it had been previously excavated (1812, 208). Grinsell confirmed Hoare's identification, classifying it as a saucer barrow (1957, 224).

Barrow 70

This disc barrow, which was, according to Grinsell, 228ft (69.5m) in diameter, was damaged 'by pigs and ploughing' (Grinsell 1957, 220); by the 1970s it was in poor condition (Grinsell 1978, 41) and is now completely levelled. However, aerial photographs taken in 1945 and 1946 (e.g. CPE/UK1811/2356-2357: Fig 3) show that the outer bank of this barrow overlay the outer bank of barrow 71; this relationship is not observable on later aerial photographs after the banks had been further spread by ploughing. However, some of these photographs suggest that the barrow ditch had an internal as well as an external bank (e.g. NMR SU 1239/7-10 (CAP LK77080) 22 Apr 1953) which would be a very rare feature.

This was Hoare's barrow no 7; he recorded that it had 'three sepulchral mounds within its area; in one of which we found the relicts of the skeleton of a youth, and fragments of a drinking cup; in the centre tump was a simple interment of burned bones, with a small brass pin; and the third seemed to have been opened before' (1812, 208).

Barrow 71

Another, even larger, disc barrow, approximately 270ft (83m) in diameter (measured by Grinsell from an aerial photograph), was also damaged by 'pigs and ploughing' (Grinsell

1957, 220); Grinsell also recorded it as being in poor condition in the 1970s (1978, 41) and it is now levelled. As noted above, its outer bank was overlain by, and is therefore earlier than, the outer bank of barrow 70. Like barrow 70 its ditch may have had an inner as well as an outer bank.

Hoare called this barrow (his no 2) 'a remarkably fine Druid barrow, which also had been opened, but not examined minutely, for on one side of the cist we found a neat lance-head of brass, and a pin of the same metal, intermixed with part of the interment of burned bones' (1812, 207). Grinsell noted that the finds with the primary cremation were a knife-dagger or knife and an awl but he also (in his later publication only) mentioned fragments of an urn and stated that 'above this was probably the skeleton of an infant' (1978, 41).



Fig 3: The general setting of the Wilsford barrow group showing some of the barrows to the north of the plantation; north to top. Spring Bottom can be seen running sinuously around the north and east sides of the spur. The Lake Down barrow group is visible at the bottom of the photograph between linear ditches and barrow Wilsford 74 can be seen midway between the two groups; barrow Wilsford 55 is visible at top centre. The external bank of barrow 70 overlies the external bank of barrow 71; the finds recovered from these barrows by William Cunnington suggest a more complex sequence. The exceptional size of these barrows can be gauged by reference to barrow 72 and Wilsford 80, the disc barrow in the Lake Down group. The track crossing barrows 71 and 72 is visible (RAF/CPE/UK/1811/2356, 29th October 1946)

Barrow 72

A third disc barrow, this one originally about 111ft (34m) in diameter within a ditch and outer bank approximately 27ft (8m) wide (overall diameter therefore about 50m), measured by Grinsell from an aerial photograph, was also damaged by 'pigs and ploughing' (Grinsell 1957, 220); now only the central mound is extant as a very slight, spread rise, less than 0.1m high. This is Hoare's barrow no 3, which contained a primary cremation with amber, shale and faience beads and a bronze awl (1812, 207; Grinsell 1978, 41).

Barrow 73

This bowl barrow survives as a slight mound, up to 0.2m high, immediately to the west of barrow 72. It cannot be seen on many aerial photographs, partly because it is often in shadow from the trees, but it is clearly visible on RAF verticals taken on 17th July 1967 (RAF/58/8182/0030-0032: Fig 4) and on a few obliques, where it shows as a mound with a surrounding ditch and has an overall diameter of about 12m. It was Hoare's no 4, in which Cunnington found 'the *cinerarium*, containing the ashes' but no interment (1812, 207).

Barrow 73a

Bowl barrow 73a is the most north-easterly barrow in the group. It survived to a height of just 3 inches (less than 0.1m) in the mid 20th century (Grinsell 1957, 199) but has subsequently been levelled and no trace remains on the surface. Nor is it visible on aerial photographs; this may suggest that it had no surrounding ditch. Hoare records it (his no 1) as a small barrow that had been previously explored (1812, 207).

Mound A

There is a very slight round mound (**A**), less than 0.1m high, on the fence line to the south-east of barrow 68. No barrow has ever been recorded here. It might be considered unlikely that Grinsell would have failed to note a barrow at this location, so it may be a fortuitous accumulation of material close to the fence junction; on the other hand, a mound this slight might have escaped even Grinsell's eagle eye if the ground and light conditions were unhelpful. Furthermore, a small indistinct ring ditch can be seen at this location on one set of vertical aerial photographs (RAF/58/8182/0030-0032 (17th July 1967): Fig 4), suggesting the possibility that it is a small bowl barrow of about the same diameter as barrow 73 (approximately 12m).

Other landscape features

The only other earthworks noted within the wood are a track through the plantation and former fence lines. The track takes a sinuous course to the south of barrows 59-62; it is a slight hollow way no more than 0.2m deep and fading at either end. The former fence lines are marked by very slight scarps parallel to the current fence demarcating the northern edge of the plantation.

A ditch (NMR SU 13 NW 75), long-since levelled, extends from a point close to barrow 64a almost due south and 'appears to cross a major boundary earthwork' (NMR SU 13 NW 18), which is believed to be of Late Bronze Age date and perhaps modified in the

Roman period (Komar 2010, 21). Though the chronological relationship is unclear, this feature cannot be seen crossing the extant linear, where it might have survived as an earthwork; it is therefore possible that it is earlier. Further south this levelled ditch turns slightly westward and appears to end close to the Lake Down barrow group (RCHME 1979, 29, map 1).

Another linear feature extends southwards from the south side of the plantation, on an alignment with the eastern tangent of barrow 62. It ends just short of the western tangent of barrow Wilsford 74. This feature, like the one described above, is only recorded on aerial photographs and has been mapped by the NMP; it was not seen on the ground during the investigation of the Lake Down barrow group, which included barrow Wilsford 74 (Komar 2010, 15), or within the wood during this survey. There is no clue as to the date of this linear feature, which may be a relatively recent boundary.

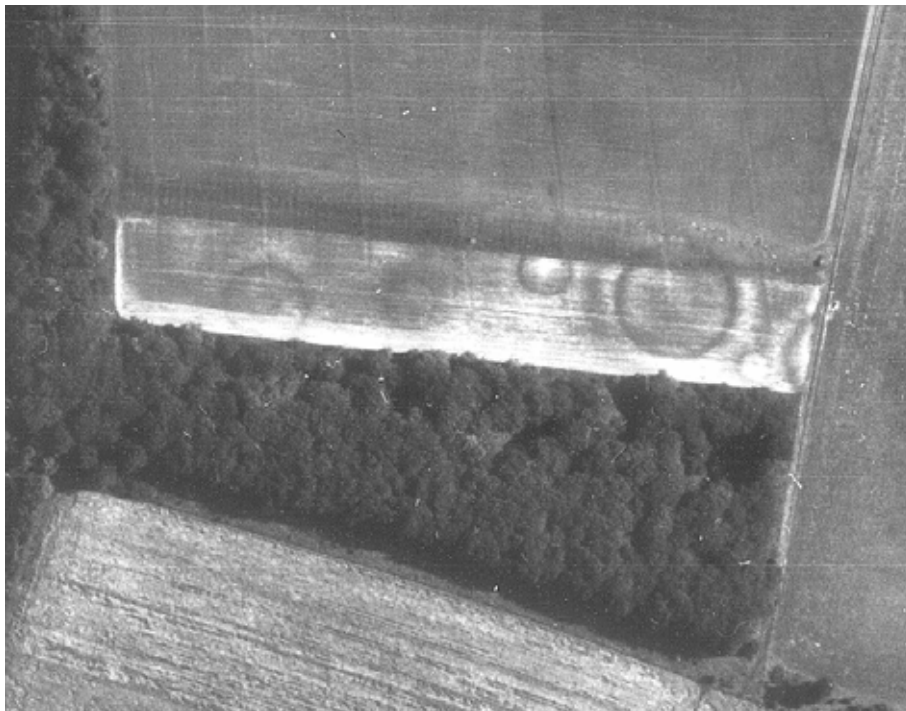


Fig 4: The barrows to the north of the plantation, showing an indistinct ring ditch at the position of mound A (centre), suggesting that this is a previously unrecorded barrow; this is one of the few aerial photographs on which barrow 73 is visible (right); the ditch of barrow 71 is faintly visible (top right) but the banks of barrows 70 and 71 have been all but ploughed away; the track crossing barrows 71 and 72 is still evident (far right); north to top (detail from RAF/58/8182/0031, 17th July 1967)

DISCUSSION

The Wilsford barrow group has received less attention than most other major barrow groups in the Stonehenge WHS. It has not been the subject of modern excavation, aerial survey or geophysical survey and no field-walking has taken place near it, although (as noted above) part of it was under the plough for much of the 20th century. Nevertheless, antiquarian observations can be coupled with the new field survey to suggest a chronological narrative for the cemetery. Unfortunately, the combination of ploughing and woodland planting severely restricts what can be said about the broader landscape history. Nevertheless there are hints of earlier activity in Neolithic finds from elsewhere on Wilsford Down and fragments of a Mortlake bowl which are said to be 'from the Wilsford Barrow Group' (Devizes Museum DZSWS 1964.12), though this probably refers to Wilsford barrows 51-54, the small cluster to the north-west of the Wilsford group excavated by Greenfield in the 1950s (Smith 1991). Later prehistoric activity is indicated only by the 'Late Bronze Age' sherds from the surface of barrow 58, mentioned above.

No	Form	Primary	Grave goods	Secondary	Grave goods
58	bell	male inhumation	st battle axe br chisel/axe 'standard' etc	-	-
59	bowl	-	-	-	-
60	bowl	inhumation	-	cremation	br dagger antler macehead flint items whetstones etc
61	bowl	-	-	-	-
62	bowl	male inhumation in grave	beaker	-	-
63	pond	-	-	-	-
64	bowl – 2 phase?	cremation in pit under flint cairn	br axe bone pin	dog skeleton	-
64a	disc	-	-	-	-
65	bowl – 2 phase?	cremation in pit cremation in pit	melted br dagger food vessel	cremation on 'floor'	-
66	disc – 2 phase?	-	-	-	-
67	bowl	inhumation in deep grave	antler and charcoal in fill		-
68	bowl	?cremation and inhumation			
69	saucer?	-	-	-	-
70	disc later than 71	male inhumation cremation	beaker br pin	-	-
71	disc earlier than 70	cremation in pit	br dagger br awl (um?)	(infant inhumation?)	-
72	disc	cremation	beads and awl	-	-
73	bowl	cremation? in pit	-	-	-
73a	bowl	-	-	-	-
A	bowl	-	-	-	-

Table 1: summary of evidence for the barrows

Of the (possibly) nineteen barrows, there are eleven bowls, five discs, one bell, one pond and one saucer. Only three show signs within their surface structure or on aerial photographs which could be evidence of phasing and there is only one case of a direct stratigraphic relationship between barrows. The finds from Cunnington's excavations can be used to construct some chronology but only in about nine cases. Interestingly, at a superficial level, the finds evidence runs counter to the little stratigraphic evidence that exists; this serves only to emphasise the potential complexity of construction and use of the cemetery.

Beakers, or fragments of beakers, accompanied two primary burials, under barrows **62** and **70**, suggesting a date for the beginnings of these monuments in the latter half of the third millennium BC. However, it is one of these barrows, **70**, for which stratigraphy indicates a later date than its neighbour. This is probably because the stratigraphy only accounts for the later elaboration of the monument, not for its origins; the beaker burial could pre-date the formation of what we can recognise as a disc barrow by some considerable time, during which period another disc barrow, **71**, was constructed in close proximity. On the other hand, as this burial was accompanied only by fragments of a beaker it might be of later date; the fragments might be token relics or heirlooms (Lawson 2007, 176). Both inhumations accompanied by beakers were described as being of young men and that beneath barrow **62** was 'stout' (Hoare 1812, 208). The beaker in barrow **62** is of the long-necked type (DM DZSWS. STHEAD.245; Clarke 1970, 409, fig 1036) but the proposed chronology, which would place this example very late in the sequence, has since been disputed (e.g. Kinnes *et al* 1991 and ensuing discussion, *Scot Archaeol Rev* **8** 1991, 69-78). While the beaker finds are beneath a disc barrow and a bowl barrow respectively, this is probably not significant as beaker burials were later elaborated in many different ways.

The richest finds were those from barrow **58** and it may not be irrelevant that this is the only bell barrow in the group. The 'King Barrow' (Winterbourne Stoke 5) contains the richest grave in the Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads barrow cemetery and is also a bell barrow; Wilsford 8, second only to the Bush Barrow in the Normanton Down group, is also a bell barrow. It is perhaps also worth noting that just as barrow **58** is the westernmost of a linear group, so the 'King Barrow' would have been the south-westernmost of a linear group before the addition of the later barrows (Winterbourne Stoke 4 and 3a) on its south-western side and Wilsford 8 marks the western end of the major Normanton Down linear group. Other possible examples of rich bell barrows at the western ends of linear groups are Amesbury 55, the 'Monarch of the Plain' (Cursus group), and Wilsford 42 (Lake group) though doubt might be expressed as to whether the former was richly furnished and whether the latter were part of a linear group. Many bell barrows show clear evidence for phases of mound enlargement; the bell form of the barrow is therefore something created over time as the barrow was used, re-used and altered, and may reflect the importance of the place or of the initial burial. Hoare described the skeleton in barrow **58** as being that of a 'very tall and stout man' (1812, 209); Thomas remarked that this burial could be compared with 'the most princely of all graves of this period, Bush Barrow, Normanton. It may be no coincidence that both the skeletons were of "tall stout men"' (1954, 323). The finds in barrow **58** suggest a similar date to the other barrows mentioned. They included a bone tube (possibly a musical instrument), a perforated bone plate, a boar's tusk (Fig 5), a grooved whetstone, a greenstone battle axe, and a bronze flanged chisel or axe with a bone handle (Thomas

1954, 321-5). The battle axe was illustrated by Thurnam (1869, fig 97) and most of the other objects by Thomas (1954, fig 3). The battle-axe falls within Roe's Intermediate Stage (1966, 221, 225; 1979, 23); the dating of these objects is far from precise but the range is approximately 1850-1300BC (Smith 1979, fig 1). The flanged bronze axe is a comparatively rare find in a barrow; it dates to between about 2000 and 1700BC (Needham 1996, fig 2, 132; Fig 5). The most unusual find, however, was the horned or



Fig 5: The pronged 'standard', bronze axe and boar's tusk from barrow **58**, as depicted by Philip Crocker (Hoare 1812, pl 29) ('standard' length 145mm, width 110mm; axe length 81mm, width 33mm; tusk length 130mm)

pronged bronze casting with a tang and a rectangular slot, to which three links of a chain were attached (ibid, fig 4; Fig 5). Grinsell considered that this object was a handle, probably from a cauldron or 'wheeled cinerary urn' originating in north or central Europe, much later than the other grave goods and therefore probably not with the primary interment but with an undiscovered secondary (1957, 212). Paul Ashbee and Arthur ApSimon, however, rejected this interpretation; they believed that the object was part of a 'standard' attached to a pole (an idea first put forward by Reginald Smith) and, though they could not find a parallel closer than central Anatolia, concluded that it was part of the primary interment (*in* Thomas 1954, 326-30); this accords better with Hoare's description (1812, 209) and with more recent scientific analysis, which suggests that the tin content of the bronze is 12.6%, comparable with that found in Camerton-Snowhill daggers (Britton 1961, 41, table 1 no 52).

In contrast to the other barrows, **60** had an unaccompanied inhumation as a primary burial but a well furnished secondary, in this case a cremation. The grave goods consisted of a perforated antler macehead, bronze knife-dagger, polished bone plaque, leaf-shaped flint knife, flint arrowhead, and two schist whetstones (DM DZSWS. STHEAD.166, 181, 181a, 185, 186, 186a, 186b; the bone plaque might, however, be from barrow **58** (Annable and Simpson 1964, 50)). The assemblage is illustrated in Gerloff (1975, pl 53C). The knife-dagger has three rivet holes and the associated assemblage seems to place it with the *Aldbourn series* burials (ibid, 163, 198, pl24 no 266). One of the associated whetstones is perforated as a pendant, which suggests that the burial is male and also supports a date in the Camerton-Snowhill phase (ibid, 167-8) now dated to approximately 1750-1500BC (Needham *et al* 2010, table 1).

Bowl barrow **64**, as mentioned above, shows possible phasing in its mound morphology. This is the only barrow in the group for which Hoare includes any detail about the structure, stating that 'the cist was protected by a thick covering of flints' (1812, 208). Cunnington referred to this as a 'vast pile of flints' (quoted by Thomas 1954, 320). Richards has pointed out that flint cairns within barrow mounds are an unusual component in the Stonehenge area and suggests that where they occur they combine the

functions of definition of a funerary site with an element of clearance for cultivation (1990, 175). Other examples include Durrington barrow 7 (the instance prompting Richards' comment), and Winterbourne Stoke barrow 6 (Grinsell 1957, 201; Bax *et al*/2010, 33). The presence of a flint cairn prompts the idea that the visual impact of mounds of different materials would have been striking and that when first built the barrows would have appeared more various than they do now. The primary cremation under barrow 64 was in a pit 0.6m deep and accompanied by a bronze flanged axe, a perforated bone pin or needle (DM DZSWS. STHEAD.189, 207) and a bone ring (now lost). The small axe, Thomas thought, should be classed as a scraper and stated that it had no parallel outside Germany, though he was unsure whether it was an import or a copy (1954, 321). Immediately over the pit (and apparently beneath the flint cairn) was the skeleton of a dog; although this occupies what is apparently a secondary position it should perhaps be seen as part of the primary funeral rites. A parallel for this was the skeleton of a small dog found by Cunnington in Collingbourne Kingston barrow 19, the 'Hunter's Barrow', above the primary interment (Hoare 1812, 183-4; Thomas 2005, 228); dog skeletons were also found in Winterbourne Stoke barrow 10, but much higher in the mound (Grinsell 1957, 201; Bax *et al*/2010, 33-4), and in Wilsford barrow 45 (Hoare 1812, 211; Grinsell 1957, 198).

Barrow 65 with three interments Hoare conjectured might be a 'family sepulchre' (1812, 208), echoing his description of Winterbourne Stoke 10, the north-easternmost barrow in the Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads cemetery (*ibid*, 125). This depth of chronology in the burial record of the barrow seems to be echoed by its outward form, the ledge around its western flank suggesting the possibility of heightening of the mound. There were two cremations in pits, therefore primary, and a secondary cremation on the 'floor' of the barrow; the presence of this secondary cremation on the 'floor' suggests the possibility that even the first-phase mound was not created until after this deposit was placed. The heat-distorted knife-dagger from one primary cremation had two rivets for attachment to a hilt (DM DZSWS. STHEAD.214; Gerloff 1975, 162, pl 23 no 254). This type of artefact is often associated with what have been called 'female burials' though in fact it often accompanies male burials; this example probably falls within Gerloff's *Aldbourn series* burials, broadly contemporary with the Camerton-Snowhill bronze tradition (1975, 167-8, 198, 214), dating to between approximately 1750 and 1500BC (Needham *et al*/2010, table 1). (Hoare's description of it as a spear-head seems to have misled Thurnam, who illustrated a small looped socketed spearhead with fire-damaged blade as this item (1869, fig 153).) The other primary cremation was in an enlarged food vessel (DM DZSWS. STHEAD.252). The chronology of food vessels is relatively imprecise, overlapping with later beakers and with earlier collared urns, but can nevertheless be placed from about 1950BC to about 1700 BC (Needham 1996, fig 2, 130; Needham *et al*/2010, table 1). It is therefore possible to suggest a relative sequence for the two cremations in 'primary' positions under this barrow: the cremation with the food vessel should pre-date the one with the knife-dagger.

Barrows 64 and 65 are the only surviving mounds in this cemetery that show possible evidence of phasing. Cunnington recorded no secondary burials high in these mounds, such as might be expected in enlarged mounds, though this might reflect his excavation method. The earthwork evidence therefore indicates more phasing than the current excavated evidence, both phases of the mound of barrow 65, for instance, possibly post-dating the known interments, as suggested above.

Barrow **67** is worthy of comment in that, though it had a low mound, the grave in which the primary inhumation was placed was exceptionally deep: 'we were obliged to dig ten feet [3m] below the level, when we discovered a skeleton, with its head laid towards the east. After digging to the depth of six feet [1.8m], our labourers began to doubt if the chalk had ever been moved; but a stag's horn, and some charred wood, soon convinced them to the contrary, and encouraged them to proceed...' (Hoare 1812, 208). As noted above, aerial photographic evidence suggests that this barrow was not ditched, so it could be inferred that the mound material was obtained largely from the grave. Very few exceptionally deep graves are recorded in the Stonehenge environs but all seem to be beneath bowl barrows: the deepest recorded (apart from Wilsford **67**) is Amesbury 51, containing an inhumation with a beaker 6ft [1.8m] below ground level (Hoare 1812, 163); Amesbury 22 had a 'cist' 4ft [1.2m] deep containing an inhumation, the bones stained by bronze objects that had been removed by a previous explorer (ibid, 199); Wilsford 40 had an infant inhumation with a beaker in a grave 5ft [1.5m] deep (ibid, 210). The only tentative conclusion to be drawn from this is perhaps that deep graves may be associated with inhumations accompanied by beakers.

The relationship between barrows **70** and **71** and the apparent mis-match with the chronology of the beaker burial under the later barrow, **70**, has been discussed above. However, the stratigraphy is further challenged by the finds from barrow **71**. This barrow covered a cremation in a pit which was certainly accompanied by a bronze knife or dagger and a bronze awl, and possibly by fragments of an urn. Unfortunately these finds seem to have been lost, so no further detail about them can be ascertained but at any rate they should be later than the beaker which is under the later barrow. Again the conclusion must be that the stratigraphic relationship between the barrows observable on aerial photographs relates only to the later elaboration of those barrows and not to their origins. This is supported by the presence in barrow **70** of another deposit, a cremation accompanied by a bronze pin (also apparently lost), under the central mound and Grinsell's hint (1978, 41) that there was also a secondary inhumation in barrow **71**, emphasising the multi-phase nature of these monuments.

The diameters of these two barrows, as measured by Grinsell from aerial photographs and quoted above, are exceptionally large (especially barrow **71**); even allowing for any inaccuracy in Grinsell's method, their exceptional size is clear from the Antiquity Model (Fig 2) and from the most cursory examination of the aerial photographs (e.g. Fig 3). These dimensions might be thought more appropriate for henges than for disc barrows; however, these monuments undoubtedly had central mounds, there are no signs of entrances and, perhaps most tellingly, the external banks appear to have been relatively slight earthworks, more appropriate to disc barrows than to henges.

Barrow **72** contained a cremation with amber, shale and faience beads, the only such deposit recovered from this barrow group, and a bronze awl. These finds, like those from barrows **70** and **71**, seem to have been lost but they place the cremation probably within the tradition that has been called 'Wessex I', dating to approximately 1950-1700BC (Needham 1996, 132; Needham *et al*/2010, table 1).

Chronological summary

From this consideration of the evidence it is possible to postulate a broad chronological sequence for the Wilsford barrow group, in three main phases:

Beaker period (c2450-1950BC): the beaker burial below barrow **62** and fragments of beaker with a cremation under barrow **70** may begin the sequence. Tentatively we might place barrow **67** with these.

Early Bronze Age 1 (c1950-1700BC): the primary burials under barrows **58**, **65** (food vessel), **72** and possibly **64** and **71** follow and the elaboration of barrow **71** may be contemporary; the building of barrow **60** with its unaccompanied primary inhumation must also belong broadly to this phase. If the suggestion above – that richly-furnished bell barrows mark the western ends of linear barrow groups – is valid, barrow **58** should come first within this phase.

Early Bronze Age 2 (c1750-1500BC): this phase comprises the elaboration of barrow **70** with its cremation burial, the rich secondary burial in barrow **60** and the cremation with melted dagger and presumably the 'secondary' cremation in barrow **65**.

The barrows without any dating evidence cannot easily be fitted into this scheme. However, those in the linear group, **61**, **62**, **63**, and possibly **59**, should follow after **58** and probably fall mainly within the Early Bronze Age 1 phase. Meagre stratigraphic evidence elsewhere shows that pond barrows sometimes post-date bowl and bell barrows (Komar 2010, 20); otherwise pond barrows are dated only by their association with food vessels and collared urns (French *et al*/2007, 125-30) placing them broadly within the 1950-1700BC period. Barrow **66**, a disc exhibiting possibly two phases of construction, must also fit within the Early Bronze Age phases, as should **69**, a saucer. It is difficult to say anything about the other barrows to the north but small bowl barrows with poorly defined ditches often relate to the slightly later, Deverel-Rimbury, phase of the Bronze Age (approximately 1550-1100BC – Needham *et al*/2010, table 1), a period of agricultural intensification and land reorganisation when co-axial fields were being laid out; barrows **68**, **73**, **73a**, **A**, and possibly **59**, might fall into this category. The 'Late Bronze Age' sherds from the surface of barrow **58** might also be of this period.

Grinsell no	Type	Hoare no	NMR no	Wilts SMR no	SAM No
58	bell	18	98	611	10356
59	bowl	17	99	612	10356
60	bowl	16	100	613	10356
61	bowl	15	101	614	10356
62	bowl	13	102	616	10356
63	pond	10	103	619	10356
64	bowl	9	104	620	10356
64a	disc	6	108	622	10356
65	bowl	5	105	624	10356
66	disc	14	109	615	10356
67	bowl	12	106	617	10356
68	bowl	11	107	618	10356
69	saucer	8	110	621	10356
70	disc	7	111	623	10356
71	disc	2	112	626	10356
72	disc	3	113	627	10356
73	bowl	4	114	625	10356
73a	bowl	1	115	628	10356
74	bowl	-	33	610	10358
-	bowl	-	276	-	10356

Table 2: Concordance of barrow numbers. All Goddard/Grinsell numbers refer to Wilsford parish; all NMR and SMR numbers are prefixed by the OS quarter sheet number SU 13 NW. Mound **A** is NMR no 276. Barrow 74, which is an outlier, is described in the report on the Lake Down group (Komar 2010, 15)

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Level 3 detailed analytical survey was carried out in Spring 2010. A Trimble R8/5800 survey grade GNSS receiver was used in Real Time Kinematic mode (RTK) with points related to an R8 receiver configured as an on-site base station. The position of the base station had previously been adjusted to the National Grid Transformation OSTN02 via the Trimble VRS Now Network RTK delivery service. This uses the Ordnance Survey's GNSS correction network (OSNet) and gives a stated accuracy of 0.01-0.015m per point.

Additional detail within the wooded area was surveyed using a Trimble 5600 Total Station theodolite by taking radiating readings from each station in a closed traverse. The traverse was adjusted for errors using Korec's Geosite software. The combined data from GPS and Total Station was downloaded into Korec's Geosite Office 5.1 software to process the field codes, then transferred to Autodesk Map 2007 software and plotted on to polyester drawing film at the elected scale of 1:000 for graphical completion in the field.

Subtle earthwork detail was added using standard graphical techniques of taped offset and radiation from established control points. The survey plan was completed at 1:1000 scale using pen and ink on plastic drawing film.

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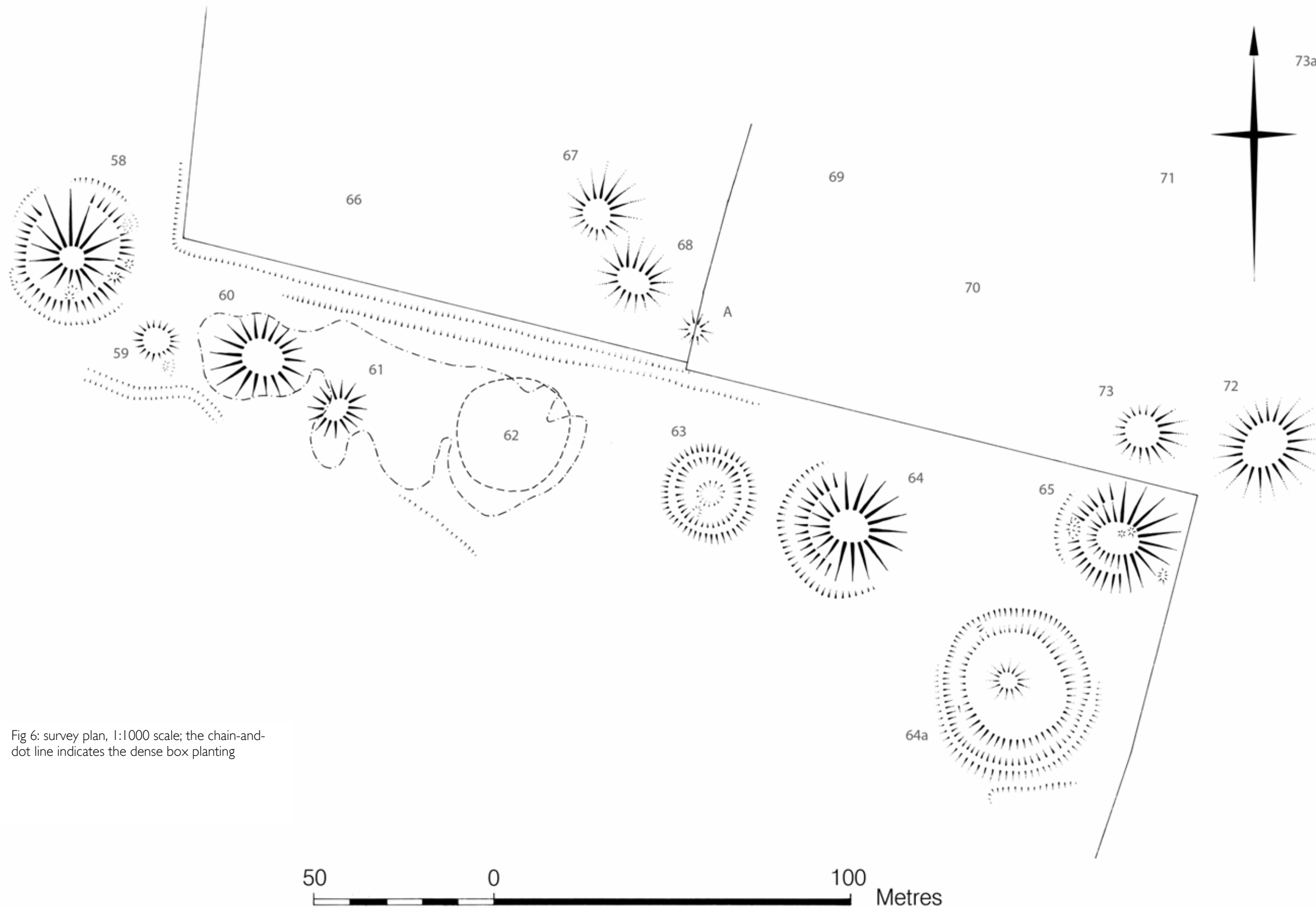


Fig 6: survey plan, 1:1000 scale; the chain-and-dot line indicates the dense box planting



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