

**SEVEN SMALL EXCAVATIONS
ON FYFIELD AND OVERTON DOWNS**

with summaries of eighteen other excavations in and near

**FYFIELD AND WEST OVERTON PARISHES,
WILTSHIRE**

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FWP66
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FYFIELD AND WEST OVERTON PARISHES, WILTSHIRE

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Seven small excavations on Fyfield and Overton Downs with summaries of eighteen other excavations in and near Fyfield and West Overton parishes, Wiltshire

Introduction

During the course of the Fyfod project, 1959–98 (Fowler 1997; 2000), seven small excavations were undertaken as well as the three large ones reported elsewhere (FWP 63, 64, 65; *LPP*, chapters 6, 7). The three large and seven small excavations were all on the northern downs in the two parishes of Fyfield and West Overton, Wiltshire, in central southern England (Plate FWP66.1; Maps 1 and 2; Figures FWP66.1, 2).

Excavations reported here

The seven small excavations are reported on here. Shorter and generally less detailed accounts are provided in *LPP*, chapters 5–7, and their results have been taken into account in the syntheses and interpretations developed in *LPP*, especially in chapters 2, 15 and 16. None of them was an area excavation; all were primarily designed to produce information from sections and consisted basically of between one and six trenches, all less than 6m in length with the exceptions of long ones on Fyfield Down and at the Down Barn Enclosure. None produced a large quantity of artefactual material, but all produced either, or both, key environmental and chronological information.

These seven ‘other’ excavations have their rationale only in the overall context of the landscape project. In all cases there was a general question, about the land-use sequence at the particular place of the excavation in the landscape, and some of the best, long successions came from this source eg FL1 on Fyfield Down and at the Down Barn Enclosure (Plates FWP66.XIII, XVI). But more to the fore in the planning at the time of this work was that each exercise was directed at asking and answering a specific question or questions within the project context, questions which in all cases had arisen from fieldwork (*cf LPP*, chapter 3). Three small excavations were involved with one of the major questions at the heart of the project; the other four were more *ad hoc* and concerned with anomalies. In those first three cases, as originally on what became the three big excavations, the question was about the date of fields, here on Lockeridge Down, Totterdown and Fyfield Down (Plate FWP66.I; Map 1); in two cases, at Down Barn and Delling, our object was to date an earthwork enclosure discovered during fieldwork, in both cases overlying fields; and in the two remaining cases, we were concerned to know a little more about stones, in one case a standing one, in the other an irregular line of them.

During the course of the project use has obviously been made of other excavations carried out in the parishes and near to their boundaries. We therefore include here summaries of results from such work where relevant to our own, first of all over the same downland of our own small excavations and then in the Kennet valley and to its south where we did not excavate at all. The following accounts are arranged primarily from north to south and then from west to east.

The northern downs: Project excavations

Plate FWP66.Ia and b show the area of the northern downs within which the following excavations occurred.

Neolithic polissoir, Lockeridge Down (OD II)

...investigations carried out [around polissoirs] in the hope of discoveries have always proved unrewarding (Lacaille 1963, 193)

A small excavation in 1963 followed up the discovery of a *polissoir*, probably one of the earliest visible features on the downs (Plate FWP66.II–IV; Figures FWP66.2–3). Some information about its context was, therefore, likely to be useful in a landscape sense. The main objective was to explore the possibility of Neolithic activity/settlement beside or near it.

Discovery and description

The stone (Figures FWP66.3 and FWP66.4; Plates FWP66.III and FWP66.IV; *LPP*, chapter 5; *SL*, colour plate 11; Fowler and Sharp 1990, plate on p 192) was discovered by Inigo Jones in 1962 and reported on, after ‘repairing to the spot under his conduct’, by Lacaille (1963) with a good description and discussion and excellent illustrations.

It is important, however, to appreciate that the *polissoir* or sarsen bench had been split north–south. Its western part of unknown size had been removed at some unknown date (though reasonably imagined as nineteenth–twentieth century; King 1968). On the one hand it seemed a remarkable stroke of fortune that the polished and grooved patch at the stone's south east (Plate FWP66.III) corner had survived the stone-breakers' destruction; on the other, one wonders what was on the perhaps larger part of the stone which has disappeared. It should be additionally recorded that close and repeated examination of the bench has shown that much of its upper surface has in fact been polished; and that the ‘focal patch’ is itself the product of time, for some grooves cut others, and some cut through previously polished areas.

Two other polished, recumbent stones have also been noted further south on Overton Down (G Swanton, pers comm), but long-term if unsystematic observation of thousands of sarsens during the course of this Project makes it unlikely that such stones are common now. With so many thousands removed or partly-removed, it can now never be known, however, whether such stones were formerly common.

Excavation

Four small cuttings were excavated on three sides of the stone, but none on the west where a block of sarsen had long been removed (Figure FWP66.4). No structures or significant features were found in plan and the stratigraphy was consistently straightforward (Plate FWP66.IV; Figure FWP66.4). Layers 1 and 2, essentially what were to become the so familiar topsoil of humus underlain by worm-sorted flints, were disturbed, probably by rabbits as much as the sarsen-breakers. The material appeared to be redeposited on top of an earlier ground surface, inferentially of medieval or earlier date.

At the north end of the sarsen bench, however, the lip of a pit or trench was partly excavated. It showed clearly in plan as a feature dug into the top of an old but undated surface at the level of the disturbed top of the Clay-with-flints; it was filled with flinty, clayey humus similar to that into which it was cut. In the top of that filling was a heavily weathered sarsen c 0.60 x 0.45m and a cluster of smaller, broken sarsen stones. The hole was at least 0.45m deep, its bottom as excavated marked by an increase in the density of flints. The evidence, though incomplete, suggested very strongly that the feature excavated was part of a hole dug to support the *polissoir* as an upright stone. The excavation was stopped, however, because enough had been done to demonstrate that, whatever the structural interest (which others may wish to explore), the immediate vicinity of the *polissoir* seemed unlikely to contribute significantly to our landscape objectives.

Evidence for stone-breaking

In a sense the most interesting landscape point to emerge from this small exercise was represented, not by Neolithic revelations but by a half-penny of King John (1197–1206, identified by the late Hugh Shortt, then curator of Salisbury Museum). Near it was an iron wedge; both were found in layer 2 at a depth of *c* 0.15m. The wedge exactly fitted the wedge-marks along the split west edge of the recumbent stone, the *polissoir* which, for reasons unknown, was left by the stone-breakers. There was also at 0.20m depth half of an iron horseshoe, probably of late- or post-medieval date. This somewhat unexpected evidence seemed to indicate active stone-breaking *c* AD 1200 at the time that people were living not so far away at Wick (*LPP*, chapter 10) and possibly beginning to occupy *Raddun* (*LPP*, chapter 7; FWP 65); with perhaps later visits too.

Prehistoric activity

Earlier activity was indicated by 20–30 flint flakes (Everton, FWP 31) including three micro-flakes, eight sarsen chips and a sarsen ‘flake’; but there was no spread of stone debris of the sort that one might expect from stone-axe manufacture had chunks of alien stone or local flint or sarsen been being roughly shaped here. Polishing axe-heads already prepared from roughouts, the function which the sarsen *polissoir* itself suggests, would not leave much material. More interesting is the possibility that the stone, then much larger than now, once stood upright. A larger excavation around its north end would be necessary to settle the matter but, if it was once a standing stone, presumably that was before it was used as a *polissoir*. Such a sequence would contrast with polished sarsens reused in the West Kennet Avenue and in the West Kennet long barrow (Burl 1979; Piggott 1963).

Conclusion

Excavation OD II did not, then achieve its initial objectives, rather bearing out Lacaille's expectations in the opening quotation and supporting his interpretation that such *polissoirs* were likely to be ‘open places’ (1963, 193). It produced two unexpected results, however, of considerable landscape interest some 4000 years apart. A somewhat squat upright stone *c* 2.10m tall and 1.80m wide may well have stood here in early–mid-Neolithic times before it was laid flat to use for polishing – perhaps grinding might be a better word? – stone axes, presumably in the third millennium if not earlier. And this same spot is then witness to sarsen stone-breaking being under way by at latest the late twelfth/early thirteenth centuries AD.

Stone structure and pit, Lockeridge Down (OD III)

Location

Slightly uphill and just a few metres north west of the *polissoir* is a somewhat irregular line of sarsens, unclear in form and nature in 1963 when it was obscured by bushes, brambles and nettles. It was perceived, as it emerged from the overgrowth, as fading out to the west and ending beside a probable standing stone (*SL*, fig 17a) to the east immediately north west of the *polissoir*. It appeared to be the remains, incomplete and probably robbed, of what might have been originally a line of upright and close-packed sarsen stones of the sort elsewhere on the downs delineating the boundaries of pre-modern fields; but it was not visibly connected to anything and did not readily fit in with the nearest field patterns to west or east.

Re-inspection in 1995 when all the superincumbent vegetation had disappeared except for a thorn tree showed it to survive from a point to the south west, visible in 1963, as illustrated in Plate FWP66.III, pass through the position of the excavation trench beside the standing sarsen between Sites II and III, and continue irregularly down the slope to the east. This clarity allowed it to be

firmly interpreted as the remains of a recent and irregular line of sarsen stones cleared from a (temporary?) arable intake on its northern side (Figures FWP66.3). Perhaps this was in the nineteenth century, or even more recently; the comparable line is now made by a fence at the edge of a cultivated field some 25m to the north.

At what was thought, in 1963, to be the feature's north east end was a small embanked depression apparently associated physically with visible 'wall' stones at a slight suggestion of a bend towards the *polissoir*. Had the point been as clear then as now, this small excavation would not have taken place. It was meant to be a single cutting merely to check whether any structure existed which might be, or have been, related to either or both the *polissoir* and the Beaker occupation which by then was known to exist at OD I (see *Lockeridge Down: OD I*). In mind too, on the basis of one standing stone (*SL*, fig 17a), one formerly standing stone (see *Neolithic polissoir, Lockeridge Down (OD II)*) and the disposition of some other recumbent sarsens in the vicinity, was the thought – one still harboured by this author – that there might possibly have been a stone circle or other form of stone structure hereabouts.

Excavation

The main excavated feature, the 'embanked depression', was a pit which cut everything else including the topsoil. It was almost certainly recent (Figure FWP66.5): a Home Guard or other military origin seems most likely. It seemed to be the source of a line of 'cob' which ran west–east through the original north–south cutting and north–south through the west–east extension, as if passing through a right-angle. This chalky material, which looked like a wall foundation with 'spill' to either side, proved to be but a few centimetres thick and to lie on top of a former topsoil, ie, it was the upcast from the bottom of the pit where it cut into Chalk below Clay-with-flints.

The short exposed length of three stones showed the sarsen wall to conform to the description above: a line of single sarsens side by side, partly under the chalk 'cob' and with a pile-up of material from the pit on their north side. The stones themselves sat on rather than in a flinty layer between the top of the Clay-with-flints and the bottom of the former topsoil, suggesting that their placement was not too long ago, ie, after the formation of the characteristic worm-sorted layer, 2. A line of sarsens roughly placed at the edge of marginal land clearance in the eighteenth or nineteenth century is a distinct possibility, though the line of sarsens was undated archaeologically.

Finds

Nevertheless, 24 separate finds contexts were recorded in this small excavation, 13 of them 'flint flakes' in layer 2 or the top of the Clay-with-flints. A sarsen flake occurred in the last; and a leaf-shaped arrowhead, a beautiful implement, occurred in layer 2 right at the south end of the cutting. Overall, here was the same sort of material in a similar context to that in OD II, suggesting that the area was indeed one of activity in one or more phases during the third millennium BC, plus or minus a century or two (*Lockeridge Down: OD I*).

Sequence

From OD II and III, therefore, tiny excavations close together around the 244m (800ft) contour, enough evidence was produced to hint at the following phases in the development and use of this particular local landscape:

- i. Standing stone: early/mid Neolithic
- ii. Axe-grinding bench, and some flint/stone-working: mid/late Neolithic
- iii. Flint-working/?occupation: late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age

- vi. Sarsen-breaking: c AD 1200
- vii. Military activity: ?1940s

Prehistoric linear ditch F4, Lockeridge Down and Totterdown (OD I, TD VIII and IX)

Location and excavation rationale

This linear feature (Map 1; Figures FWP66.3, FWP66.6; Plates FWP66.II, III and IV) was and is a bank and ditch for much of its length and has been interpreted as a track at least in parts (F4 in Bowen and Fowler 1962 L2/F4 in *LPP*; Lacaille 1963, 190: ‘credibly part of an ancient trackway’; discussed in *LPP*, chapters 2 and 4). It was important to examine its structure or structures, and to date it and its phases, because it stretched west–east right across the northern part of the study area and was related *en passant* to a number of features. It therefore provided a crucial horizontal datum in landscape terms, with a potential for both functional and chronological information. Cuttings 4ft (c 1.2m) wide in such a wide landscape were clearly not going to answer all questions, for the chances of finding stratified and datable evidence were small; but it was hoped that by placing them carefully in the light of fieldwork some relative dating and possibly structural evidence might be established.

In a conscious pattern of controlled variation, cutting OD I was placed close to the highest point in the course of the bank and ditch on Upper Chalk, immediately east and slightly downslope of the Ridgeway on Lockeridge Down (Figure FWP66.3; OD I = Overton Down I, so-named before it was appreciated that this northernmost tip of Overton Down was historically part of Lockeridge Down, a name we have reinstated, *LPP*, chapters 5, 10). OD I was also not far from the *polissoir* (Plate FWP66.III). TD VIII was meant to provide a marked contrast, testing whether morphological form varied with topographical and geological situation. It was cut c 0.5km east of and below OD I, on Clay-with-flints and facing south west at a point where clearly defined, stone-walled fields were laid off south from the bank (*LPP*, chapter 5; Plate FWP66.II). TD IX was higher up the slope of Totterdown, again on Clay-with-flints but carefully sited to test the field deduction that the ditch continued upslope under a ‘Celtic’ field after the track along it had turned off to the south east (*LPP*, chapter 5).

Lockeridge Down: Site OD I

Excavation showed the slight remains of a bank to survive on the south side of the ditch (Figure FWP66.6; Plate FWP66.IV; *SL*, colour plate 13). Its rear was marked by a sarsen stone at the foot of the slight superficial rise, and by the end of a tenuously-surviving old ground surface. In it and its erosion products at the rear were three flint flakes and five probably Beaker/Early Bronze Age sherds. The ditch to the north was 1.34m deep below the old land surface, cut entirely into Chalk though presumably it had originally cut through a thin layer of Clay-with-flints. The main features of the ditch filling were the relatively large amount of structureless humic, not chalk, deposit, and the near-horizontal layer of chalk lumps across the upper part of that humic material (for layer numbering here, and throughout FWP 66; see FWP 70; Figure FWP66.6). The former is interpreted as the product of erosion, perhaps in view of its position high on the downs at least in part from aerial deposition; the latter is interpreted as the surface of a trackway laid in the top of what at the time would have been a slight linear depression physically but may also (still?) have been a boundary. The same zone contained a Beaker sherd, two flint flakes and an iron nail. The first were presumably residual at that level, weathering out from the ditch sides; the last is a small piece of evidence on which to hang a landscape but it does not stop the trackway level being Romano-British, as was guessed at the time, and now able to be seen as part of a major reorganisation evidenced over the whole of the study area (*LPP*, chapters 2, 4, 16).

Sequence

The landscape and structural sequence evidenced in this cutting is therefore of a Beaker activity area cut through by a long ditch and covered by its bank. At the foot of Avebury Down to the west this same ditch cuts through some ‘Celtic’ fields (Plate FWP66.Ia) so a post-Beaker horizon is not perhaps surprising. Conversely, other fields in the same area are laid off from it (Figure FWP66.3). After a long period of deposition, the line of the ditch at OD I was probably reused as a track after receiving a chalk surface, probably (though not so-dated independently here) *c* AD 100. The earthwork grassed over and has remained undisturbed at this point ever since (though quarried away a few metres to the west).

This evidence and its interpretation can be merged with that from OD II and III to suggest a local landscape sequence for this northern end of Overton Down:

- i. Standing stone: Early/mid Neolithic
- ii. Axe-grinding bench, and some flint/stone-working: mid/Late Neolithic
- iii. Flint-working/?occupation with Beaker pottery: Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age
- iv. Boundary bank and ditch (+?field wall): Middle/Late Bronze Age
- v. Trackway along Bronze Age boundary ditch: *c* AD 100
- vi. Sarsen-breaking: *c* AD 1200
- vii. Field-clearance and arable to north, eighteenth–nineteenth century
- viii. Military activity: ?1940s

This area clearly has a high potential for producing further information about several matters, its main significance probably lying in its hints of activity and structure in the (?fourth,) third and second millennia BC. These small excavations were suggestive rather than conclusive but together, and at minimal cost, they provided an outline of landscape sequence in a fairly unpromising-looking *locale* towards the higher northern limits of the study area.

Totterdown: Ditch F4 continued, Totterdown TD VIII and IX

The linear ditch and bank were next examined in two places on the south west-facing slope of Totterdown on the assumption that this was the same ditch, F4, as that on Lockeridge Down (Plate FWP66.V; Figures FWP66. 5, 6). It certainly appears to be a continuation of it, but a slight doubt exists as to whether it is actually the same (see *conclusions from the three cuttings through F4*).

Cutting TD VIII

This was the more westerly of the two trenches, and was placed on the lower slopes of Totterdown where stone-walled fields are laid off from the ditch’s southern side. Remains of the bank were slight, being represented by a thickening of a layer of small flints and a single sarsen stone in the underlying Clay-with-flints but probably marking the bank front. The inner edge of the ditch cut this layer (FWP 70, 49) just in front of the stone. The ditch dimensions were similar to those in cutting OD I (Figure FWP66.6). The fill was not complex, indicating a long process of deposition (FWP 70, layers 5, 14, 43, 23a), with a progression from a primary fill (FWP 70, 7) of coarser soil with large flints to a fine brown (wind-blown?) soil beneath the topsoil (FWP 70, 14).

Twelve stratified artefacts were recovered from the ditch fill. Two were small flint blades (find nos 4,14 in original record: FWP 89, Box 99 at Devizes Museum), presumably Neolithic, one in the primary fill, the other high on a tip-line; both were interpreted as representing pre-ditch activity on the 'natural' Clay-with-flints, whence they moved into the ditch. The other ten objects formed an homogeneous group of Late Bronze Age potsherds, all of a sparsely flint-gritted fabric; they were similarly interpreted, not least because five of them were on the disturbed Clay-with-flints beneath the slight bank. This material should therefore pre-date the ditch at this point, providing a *terminus post quem*. Given the absence of any later material, they suggest a construction date in the first half of the first millennium BC. This is somewhat later than a Middle Bronze Age horizon suggested for similar ditches in other places in Wessex but not in any way significantly different from the dating suggested for analogues on Salisbury Plan (Bradley *et al* 1994; *cf* Gingell 1992).

Of singular importance is the recognition of Late Bronze Age activity pre-dating – though perhaps only just – a major phase of landscape organisation represented by the construction of the ditch and the laying out of fields southwards from it; though it is possible that, despite appearances (*SL*, plate 25), the ditch physically defined the northern edge of a block of fields already in existence. On the former interpretation, the *sequence* on Totterdown, the nature of landscape re-organisation, and probably the chronology too, seem similar to that on central Overton Down (ODX/XI, FWP 63). Whether that be true or not, this Totterdown ceramic material is most likely to have been scattered in this area through manuring during a phase of activity preceding the digging of the ditch. It might even be argued that it was associated with the ditch itself, for similar material was not encountered further south east on the same slope in cuttings TD I–III (see *Roman field system and cup-marked stone, Totterdown (TD I–III)*).

Cutting TD IX

The third excavation across the bank and ditch was further up Totterdown, approximately 140m north east of TD VIII (Figures FWP66.3 and 6). As with the previous trench, the geology is Clay-with-flints over Upper Chalk. The excavation was planned to demonstrate that the feature existed at this point where it had not previously been noted eg by the Ordnance Survey. This was because its course as a trackway swung off to the south east and becomes a low, double-lynchet trackway (Plate FWP66.II, VI and XIX; Figure FWP66.7). The ditch itself continues north eastwards as a slight and partly overploughed earthwork, first beneath a 'Celtic' field lynchet and then beneath a larger, more prominent curving scarp, probably originally an enclosure bank but also a lynchet and locally called the 'Jousting Yard'. Between those two lynchets F4 (or its continuation) was visible first as a slight linear depression and then as a low bank with ditch on the north. In both forms, it marked the north western edge of a 'Celtic' field.

The bank, still on the south side of the ditch, was relatively well-preserved close to the 'Jousting Yard', having been respected by cultivation associated with the 'Celtic' field. Its southern edge was defined by a sarsen revetment, two courses of which remained. A spread of stones, probably collapse from the sarsen revetment, overlay a very thin layer of flinty soil in the top of which rested a single grog-tempered (early?) Romano-British sherd. In this protected context, four grooves had survived, each scratched into the surface of the Chalk for a depth of c 10–15mm. Slightly asymmetrical in profile, the southernmost ran obliquely across the cutting; the other three were fragmentary but parallel to the first and approximately parallel to the rear of the bank. The fragility of such evidence was demonstrated by its non-survival a mere 1 m. to the west where a small cutting (IXa) containing no collapsed revetment contained no such grooves.

The grooves were interpreted as ard-marks. Their location suggested that they had been created when extra pressure was applied to an ard during the ploughing-up of the headland alongside the field boundary. Here the sarsen revetment of the bank was the field edge and a slight negative lynchet was created at its foot. This would probably have reduced the thickness of cultivable soil to an extent that led the ard-tip to bite through any remaining Clay-with-flints subsoil and into the

underlying Chalk. In contrast, a few metres to the south west, cultivation had been carried over the bank and ditch, ploughing it down, and the northern edge of the ditch then came to mark the limit of the field.

The bank lay directly on top of Clay-with-flints and was composed of flinty soil with sarsens in it on the south and smaller sarsens on its top in the centre. It had originally been fronted on the ditch (north) side by a drystone revetment but all that remained *in situ* was a ledge cut into the subsoil where it had presumably stood. Flints lay on the ledge, trailing down into the ditch behind a block of the revetment which had slipped down as a small but cohering piece of drystone masonry.

The stones had come to rest in the top of the main filling in the ditch centre, a brown, stone-free humus equivalent to the similar material in OD I (see *Lockeridge Down: Site OD I*). Below it was a layer of flinty soil and, in the rounded ditch bottom, the weathered product of eroded subsoil containing flecks of charcoal. Perhaps these reflected a phase of land-clearance by burning before or at the time of the ditch-digging, but what is reasonably clear is that the bank stood, drystone walled to both back and front, for some considerable time.

The stratigraphy indicated that the collapse of the front revetment was certainly late in the depositional sequence. The evidence from FL I (see *FL I*) coupled with other general considerations, suggest that the stone revetments relate to the early Romano-British period. Two of the four artefacts from this small excavation were Romano-British sherds from the sondage IXa, their context the equivalent of Figure FWP66.6, TD IX, southern end, layer 23a. Three sarsen stones and associated chippings high in the ditch fill along its outer edge almost certainly represent post-medieval sarsen-breaking associated with the fourth artefact, an externally-glazed potsherd probably of seventeenth/eighteenth century date.

Conclusions from the three cuttings through F4

The evidence from the three excavations across the linear ditch suggests that it is later than the Neolithic and Early/Middle Bronze Age (Cuttings OD I, TD VIII) and earlier than Romano-British and post-medieval (TD IX). The complete absence of any sort of Early Iron Age pottery from all cuttings may be significant (the same was true of cuttings TD I–III). The ditch, perhaps an extension of the original, is associated with a block of stonewalled fields at the foot of Totterdown, independently suggested as ‘early’ on morphological grounds (*LPP*, chapter 2). At this point, the bank accompanying the ditch overlay LBA sherds. Furthermore, the ditch and its bank on Totterdown have unambiguously been overploughed by cultivation within a ‘Celtic’ field and are overlain by a curving lynchet which, as at OD XI on Overton Down, encapsulates the boundary of a probable Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age enclosed settlement. All the pointers suggest a date in the first half of the first millennium BC, perhaps somewhere in the eighth–sixth century, at least for the length of ditch on Totterdown.

But the ditch itself, a long landscape feature, may not actually be of only one build. It may well be the structure sectioned in OD I is not the same as that in TD VIII and IX: the natural end for the former is at the head of the Valley of Stones below to its east (Figure FWP66.3) where indeed the ditch is both discontinuous, not necessarily only from the disturbance there, and kinked to the north to continue up Totterdown. Its general relationship westwards on to Avebury Down seems to be with barrow groups as much as fields (Plate FWP66.Ia; Map 1) so it could well be that it actually comprises two lengths of different date: a western part running up to span the Ridgeway in a (post-Beaker) Early/Middle Bronze Age phase; and an eastern length from the head of the Valley of Stones added in the Late Bronze Age as cultivation spread on to new lands lying on Totterdown’s Clay-with-flints instead of the rendzina soils of Avebury and Overton Downs. Whatever the precise chronology in its prehistoric phases, its functions, first as a boundary feature and, more circumspectly, as a Romano-British track, seem certain.

Roman field system and cup-marked stone, Totterdown TD I–III

The old grassland of Totterdown is part of the higher reaches of Fyfield Down, with a sarsen-strewn, south-facing slope of characteristically 3–5° exposed to winds from the south west and icy blasts from the north east. Its elevation, some 200–250m above sea level, is relatively high for southern England (Plates FWP66.II and VI; Map 2; Figure FWP66.3; *SL*, figure 15). The name ‘Totterdown’ is almost certainly modern, first appearing on nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps with no obvious antecedents. The area was probably part of the *pastura vocata Dyllinge* of the 1567 Pembroke Survey, a name reflected in Dillon Down of 1811 when the name ‘Overton Sheep Down’ was also used. Clearly of pastoral use for at least four centuries, Totterdown nevertheless shows in its excellently-preserved earthworks and stone arrangements patterns of former arable use during at least four phases, respectively medieval, early Roman (our main concern here), probably Late Bronze Age associated with linear ditch F4 (*above*) and an even earlier (?Bronze Age) phase. All are visible on Plate FWP66.II.

A field system incorporating a cup-marked stone was identified and published early in the project (Fowler 1967; Lacaille 1962; *SL*, colour plate 12). Initially it was thought that these were contemporary, but fieldwork soon dismissed that idea, showing that the stone belonged to an earlier phase of land-use and had been unintentionally incorporated within a later field system. Nevertheless, the stone is of considerable interest in its own right, being a rare survival in southern England. Quite why it should be here at all is unclear. There are no parallels in the study area, nor any obvious immediately local context. It is, however, likely that blocks of cultivated fields were developing in the vicinity during in the earlier second millennium BC when the stone may well have been marked and, of course, a general context of ‘land-marking’ is provided on these downs by the round barrow cemeteries (*LPP*, chapters 2 and 7).

The field plan (Figure FWP66.7) is probably wrong in suggesting that the long straight, north west–south east bank is part of the original layout as marked by long rectilinear fields on a north east–south west axis. Their boundaries appear now on air photographs (eg Plate FWP66.II) to underlie the bank which, even if structurally later, still seems to respect the overall arrangement. Four small cuttings were excavated within this field system. Three were across the boundaries a single field and the fourth examined a nearby field boundary for comparative purposes (Plates FWP66.VII and VIII; Figure FWP66.7). The boundaries were slight low banks rather than simple lynchets; they did not, nor do they, show as clearly on the ground as in Professor St Joseph's superb air photograph (Plate FWP66.VI). The aims of the excavation were to date the field system and to see if its boundaries contained any structural components.

Cutting II (FWP66.8, for this and sections of all other cuttings), in the middle of a field, provided the baseline against which to compare sections through the boundaries. It showed a straightforward three-layer stratigraphy above the Clay-with-flints, with the top of that subsoil disturbed in layer 3. All of the field edge cuttings showed similar evidence with the addition of an extra layer between 2 and 3, taken to be the remains of a bank or the slight accumulation of ploughsoil against it (Plate FWP66.IX). It may even have been nothing more than an unploughed baulk between arable plots. In cuttings TD Ib and II (Plate FWP66.X) the ‘bank’ effect looked as if it was largely created by such a baulk, accentuated by a furrow cut through the then topsoil to either side of it. Other than this the field boundaries contained no structure.

The dating evidence is reasonably clear. A few prehistoric items (but again no Early Iron Age sherds) underlay the area, hinting that Bronze Age cultivation may have occurred here, possibly providing a context for the decorated stone. The field system whose boundaries we excavated was dated by a small number of early Roman sherds, some from particularly significant contexts, notably in or on the ‘banks’ or in their contemporary ploughsoil (detailed in the Archive). There was no later material. At the time of the original investigation it was thought that this morphologically distinct field system was an outlying isolated group of fields on high, marginal

land. It can now be seen that it has a context in a general re-arrangement of land allotment and use early in the Roman period, both locally and further afield (*LPP*, chapters 2 and 16).

Prehistoric and Roman fields, Fyfield Down (FL 1–5)

The traditional pastoral land-use on Fyfield Down was indicated by documentary evidence since the fourteenth century (Hare in FWP 65), and its more recent names of ‘Rodden Cow Down’ in the late eighteenth century, ‘East Overton Cow down’ in 1811 and ‘Overton Cow down’ in 1819; yet much of the area was characterised by extensive remains of pre-medieval fields and by areas of ridge-and-furrow, presumably remains of medieval cultivation.

Fieldwork led to thoughts of trying to date and further characterise such remains by excavation. The initial reason for excavating enclosures beside Wroughton Copse (FWP65; Figure FWP66.9; Plate FWP66.XI) had indeed been to date the underlying fields but, by 1961, it was clear that the matter was not going to be resolved there, at least as far as the ‘Celtic’ fields were concerned; though the fact that the enclosures proved to be medieval, and of a farmstead, seemed to provide a context for the ridge-and-furrow (FWP 65; *LPP*, figures 2.3, 7.11). It was therefore decided to tackle the matter head-on by excavating one or more large lynchets at the sides of demonstrably pre-medieval fields. After considerable inspection, one was chosen more-or-less in the middle of Fyfield Down (and of Major Allen’s famous air photograph (*LPP*, frontispiece; Plate FWP66.XI) in the belief that it was clear of medieval cultivation. No ridge-and-furrow was visible in or over the chosen early field. It was intended that this excavation would illuminate both chronology and questions of why and how such large lynchets had accumulated on a slope of only 3°.

Even though the largest lynchet on the Down was deliberately avoided, logistically the excavation was akin to sectioning a hillfort rampart. That chosen was nearly 3m high lying north–south along the west side of a field and just north of its south west corner. The trench through it was 15.3m long (FL 1), with an addition through the lynchet uphill on the east side of the ‘Celtic’ field (FL 2; Figure FWP66.10). The line of examination was extended 25.8m further east to a test-pit (FL 3) in the top of the nearest ridge of ridge-and-furrow lying north–south in the ‘Celtic’ field adjacent to that sectioned. Four small cuttings (FL 4, 5) were also excavated right on the corner of the ‘Celtic’ field itself to elucidate the main structural question arising from FL 1 (Plate FWP66.XII; Bowen and Fowler 1962, 105, pl iia; Fowler and Evans 1967). Here and in *LPP*, chapter 7, differences from those 1960s accounts and interpretations represent deliberate revision in the light of a re-examination of the primary evidence and a better understanding now of its landscape context (*cf* also *SL*, colour plate 14, figure 26).

FL 1

Stratigraphy

FL 1 (Figure FWP66.11; Plates FWP66 XII and XIII) was excavated by hand, layer by layer. The soils varied in their proportions of chalk, humus and flint but essentially they all consisted of small granules and had clearly been pulverised to varying degrees. Figure FWP66.11 makes the main stratigraphical points graphically; (for layer numbers and descriptions, see FWP 70). To provide a time-frame for the section immediately, layer I/top of 23 contained a scatter of shrapnel fragments, presumably of late 1940s vintage; layer 23, the worm-sorted flinty residue from layer 1, contained a scattering of Early Iron Age and Roman sherds, mainly the latter. The bulk of the cultivation may well, then, have taken place by soon after AD 100, by which time the top of the lynchet, essentially the present ground surface, had reached its existing height above the old ground surface.

Below layer 23 was as much as 1.20m of accumulated deposits. At their base, lying directly on solid Upper Chalk was a light brown soil with flints overlain by a dark ginger soil with flints, small chalk lumps and flecks of charcoal. This was a disturbed, probably cultivated, old ground surface. Beneath it, intruding into the Chalk was a shallow depression filled with light brown soil, flints and chalk lumps, probably a tree-hole (Evans 1972, fig 120; similar to one carefully excavated and similarly interpreted at the Overton Down experimental earthwork 1992, Bell *et al* 1996, 76–7, 140, figs 7.12, 7.13).

Well down the slope of the scarp forming the front of the lynchet, and very near the present grass surface, was a small drystone wall (*cf* TD IX). All the rest of the stratification was related to it. Layers 24a, 24b and 38c had piled up behind it, but in each case the crest of each layer was well back from the wall itself. An increase in the amount of humic material immediately behind the wall characterised the deposit between layers 24a and 38c: perhaps it resulted from turf and topsoil developing and then buried in a protected niche immediately behind the wall.

The wall itself stood on a ledge only 0.15–0.25m wide at the west end of layer 14. It consisted entirely of smallish sarsen stones, characteristically 0.30m across, all broken and packed around with large flints making up the body of the structure. A sarsen saddle quern was built into the bottom course (Figure FWP66.11). The wall had tipped forward a little, not surprisingly in view of the 1.5m of ploughsoil which had accumulated behind it; yet it had never been a large structure, for no tumble or collapse lay to its front nor was there any sign of robbing. Two or three courses at most probably constituted its original form. It would not therefore have kept animals in or out so its most likely function, if not just decorative, was perhaps tenorial, marking the edge of a property as well as a field.

Layer 14 stopped immediately west of the wall, below it being the steep slope of bare Chalk in the negative lynchet. Some material from the wall and behind it had slipped in but westwards the stratification was topsoil on Chalk.

Finds

Slightly more than 100 sherds were retrieved from FL I, all small and many abraded. Their presence can in general be regarded as the accidental by-product of manuring. Even those explicable in the lynchet as derived from the old ground surface may have arrived there originally with manure in fields earlier than those of the ‘drystone-wall’ phase. The sherds range in date from possibly Neolithic to second century AD, with nothing later. In general, the sherds became earlier with depth. Layer 14 seemed to be a prehistoric ground surface, probably cultivated in the second millennium BC if not earlier. Interpretation originally envisaged it being disturbed (again?) in the mid-first millennium BC when the visible field system of the ‘drystone wall’ phase was laid out (Bowen and Fowler 1962, 105).

Re-examination of the stratification, contexts and all the pottery in 1995 (by Wessex Archaeology) and again in 1998 (by this author) indicates, however, that while layer 14 was in fact of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date, the wall itself was inserted in the later first century AD and not during the pre-Roman Iron Age. The distribution of sherd dates in Figure FWP66.11 is based on these later re-examinations. Meanwhile, of course, other work and re-assessment has quite independently provided a context for this unexpected redating of the famous Fyfield Down fields: a ‘drystone-wall’ phase, at least as indicated in cutting FL 1, now conveniently fits into the locally widely-attested period of rapid and substantial landscape re-organisation towards the end of the first century AD (*LPP*, chapters 2 and 15).

FL 2

A further cutting on the eastern side of the field from FL 1 sought to establish whether a wall also existed there (Figure FWP66.10). The remains of a wall were indeed found, much more disturbed (probably by rabbits) than in FL 1 but of the same size and form. There was, however, no good dating evidence in this case.

FL 4 and 5

Since it now appeared likely that the whole field was enclosed by a wall, two small and rapidly excavated cuttings (Figure FWP66.10) checked the presence or otherwise of a wall or walls at the south west corner of the same field. Only one course of a former wall existed in FL 4; it did not bend round the field corner to the east and, although the evidence was inconclusive, if it continued at all it went straight on southwards. There was just the possibility of a gap, perhaps a gateway, in a southern continuation (FL 5), though the point excavated is shown as damaged by traffic ruts in Allen's 1934 air photograph (*LPP*, frontispiece); but then perhaps the downland track went for that point because the obstacle of a lynchet was absent.

FL 3

A small test pit (Figure FWP66.10) was also dug to see if the soil was a greater depth at the centre of a rig in a pattern of ridge-and-furrow east of the 'Celtic' field already examined. It was not; nor was there a flinty layer 2. Two implications were that the latest, presumably medieval, ploughsoil had been flint-free, and that the undulations of the ground surface reflected, or were reflected by, similar undulations in the surface of the Chalk subsoil.

Conclusion

This little exercise on Fyfield Down succeeded in dating the lynchets and the fields they bounded to a beginning and periodic use from *c* 2000 BC onwards, ending with a terminal phase associated with drystone walling of the late first century AD. The earlier phases of activity, perhaps initially occupation but thereafter cultivation, involved ground disturbance and the accumulation of a lynchet along a line which seems to have remained a constant feature in a changing landscape throughout the second and first millennia BC, even though cultivation was not apparently continuous. The archaeology was successfully correlated with an environmental signal identified 30 years later (*LPP*, chapter 15).

These famous Fyfield Down 'Celtic' field lynchets in their existing form are then of early Roman date and were, at least in part, built. At an early stage of their last use, with drystone walling just showing among arable fields, the landscape would have looked totally different from the grass-covered downland sheep-runs and horse-gallops of today.

Down Barn Enclosure: prehistoric stratigraphy, Roman occupation and a post-Roman earthwork

This particular earthwork enclosure is described in its landscape context in *LPP*, chapter 6. It was discovered during early fieldwork and subsequently twice excavated on a small scale, as part of the Project but not under this author's direction. Trapezoidal in plan, it lies across the bottom of the narrowing dry valley *c* 250m north uphill of Down Barn, with old pasture upslope to its immediate north on Overton Down and permanent arable similarly sited to its south (Figures FWP66.12, FWP66.13; Plates FWP66.XIV–FWP66.XVI). The former contains, only 150m distant, late Roman site OD XII (FWP 64); the latter may well have been continuously under cultivation since the tenth century AD (*LPP*, chapter 4).

Description

The enclosure's northern ditch cuts along a narrow terrace, or double lynchet track, on the combe's north side, apparently a continuation down the dry valley of the Romano-British track running right across the Overton Down landscape (Map 1; Figure FWP66.12). A round pond lay outside an entrance on the enclosure's southern and downhill side. Inside, a low platform lay against the bank on each of the long sides. The whole site has been smoothed over by some form of light cultivation in the early 1970s, so the sharpness of the earthworks and some of the critical detail existing when surveyed in the early 1960s have now gone; but the site is still visible (Plate FWP66.XV), and damage appears to be only superficial. The position, shape and size, and relationships of this enclosure suggested it was 'late' in the local landscape sequence and likely to be of considerable significance. This has proved to be the case.

Excavation history

Excavation has occurred twice since the enclosure's discovery in November, 1961, on both occasions with this author's encouragement in the hope of advancing the Fyfod project. First, John Scantlebury, then a master at Marlborough College, started a fairly ambitious trial excavation with boys from the College Archaeological Society on four afternoons a week through the summer term of 1962. The work was not renewed but enough had been done to establish the basic stratigraphy. Furthermore it was related to a Roman horizon which pre-dated or was contemporary with the enclosure, a crucial point which has now been clarified. An interim report was published (Scantlebury in Fowler 1963a, 349–50). A second excavation was carried out in 1995–6.

1962 excavation

The following is a summary of the published interim report (Fowler 1963a, 349–50), with interpretative interpolations by this author in [square brackets].

A grid of 10ft (*c* 3m) squares was laid out across the centre of the enclosure but was not completely excavated; and a section was cut through the enclosure bank and ditch on the south west. The ditch was *c* 1.2m deep, V-shaped and cut through a humic layer into the Chalk. The bank was merely a low spread of soil and occupation material. Within the enclosure, all over the area excavated, was a rubbly spread of occupation material, 'rich in pottery, bone and iron' but without evidence of a substantial structure. 'Traces of what may be a small hut were found, defined by two parallel lines of small broken sarsens with a floor of packed chalk between' but the 'complete ground plan' was not recovered. This is the only record of this 'structure', the exact location and stratigraphical context of which are unknown. There is no good reason, however, to doubt the existence of a feature as described. Its description now reads similarly to that of the also somewhat ambivalent 'Building 4A' subsequently excavated on the adjacent Site OD XII though only recognised in post-excavation analysis (*LPP*, chapter 6; FWP 64).

This feature was probably in the central area of the western 'platform'. The doubt about its context is only whether it was associated with or laid into the (here apparently late Romano-British) occupation level. The 'platform' itself is now known to be post-Roman, and so too would be this 'structure' if it was actually on, rather than covered by, the 'platform'. It is one of two possible excavated structures recorded by the 1962 excavation from inside the enclosure, though a 'possible building' was described in the slight earthworks on the 'platform' on the east side of the enclosure. The critical evidence has now been smudged out but reinterpretation of the plan (Figure FWP66.13) suggests that the earthworks in question may have been residual elements of the terrace-way, not a building.

The occupation layer rested on ‘a sterile layer of fine, dark brown earthy clay, some 3ft (0.90m) thick at its deepest point and thinning out towards the sides of the valley.’ [*cf* Plate FWP66.XVI, photographed 33 years later; Scantlebury was not to know this but the material was remarkably similar in appearance and texture to that in the upper centre of the linear ditch across Overton Down North and Totterdown, as exposed in cuttings OD I and TD VIII, *cf* Plates FWP66.V; *SL* colour plate 13]. Two suggestions were made. One, that this layer might ‘represent a flood deposit in the valley bottom’, a preference for this interpretation being expressed because of ‘the archaeological sterility of the layer’ [now known not to be the case]; second, that the soil accumulation in the combe bottom was ‘the result of accelerated soil creep and rain wash from arable fields on or immediately above its sides’ [an interpretation now tending to be preferred (*LPP*, chapters 6, 14)].

Beneath this thick humic layer was another rubble layer lying on the Chalk. It apparently contained ‘a grouping of large sarsen boulders suggesting some form of rectangular structure’ [but again this was not followed up and this published phrase is the only record].

The 1962 excavation produced ‘large quantities of pottery and a considerable amount of animal bone, of which a high proportion appears to be sheep, iron nails, three very eroded bronze coins and the pin of a bronze brooch.’ Among the pottery were ‘a fairly soft red ware’, a ‘rather harder, light grey ware’, and a ‘black ware’. The last was subdivided into a wheel-made fabric with ‘a fine burnished surface’, and a much more gritty fabric, ‘apparently hand-made’ [This sounds like Black Burnished ware fabrics 1 and 2). Recognisable forms in this black ware included ‘low-sided dishes and fairly straight-walled pots with a characteristic outer flange just below the rim’. The conclusion was that ‘the whole assemblage would fit quite well into a late Romano-British context towards the close of the 4th century or possibly rather later.’ ‘Two or three stray medieval sherds’ were also found.

From the layer of rubble beneath the occupation layer came about half-a-dozen ‘sherds of undecorated, coarse pottery, rich red–brown in colour and containing a large amount of crushed chalk.’ [PJF saw some pottery from this layer at the time and thought that one or two sherds might have been ‘Beaker’, provisionally thinking that in general an Early Bronze Age phase was probably being indicated].

Unfortunately, the excavation was uncompleted and the records of it disappeared. Considerable efforts to trace them, and/or the excavator, failed. When, therefore, in a remarkable return to the project's origins, a site was needed in 1995 for a small-scale training excavation to follow up an adult education archaeology course for Bristol University, it was suggested that the 1962 cuttings be re-emptied and their sides cut back to record what was known to be, from memory, a particularly important sequence not just about the enclosure but about the landscape's evolution.

1995 excavations

The 1962 excavation plan had been surveyed on to the original field survey at the time so it was possible to relocate the trenches exactly. Furthermore, the outlines of the actual trenches were momentarily visible before new growth of the very, very short, sheep-grazed grass over the site early in 1995. Under the direction of the tutor (and co-landowner), Gill Swanton emptied the trenches of the main north east–south west cutting with a mechanical back-acter. Work to clean up and record the archaeology proceeded during the first part of 1995. So much data and material were recovered that a full excavation report is now being prepared for publication by the director elsewhere. Meanwhile she has provided full access to the evidence and material to enable the following note to be prepared. We are especially grateful for the photograph of the section (Plate FWP66.XVI), published in preference to a drawn section which, it was agreed, should not be abstracted to go with a short note rather than the full report.

The new excavation essentially confirmed the main points in the interim report. It produced, however, two major chronological differences and a lot more archaeological detail with which we

are not particularly concerned here. Stratigraphically, in the centre of the dry valley the combe floor of solid Chalk lay some 1.5m below the present surface, creating the need and the opportunity to explain those 1.5m in terms of landscape development (Plate FWP66.XVI). It was covered with a thick, humic old land surface

Below and within the old land surface was evidence of both structure (post-holes) and activity (flints, pottery). This layer contained an area of Mesolithic activity (flints, almost absolutely rare in the study area) with a Neolithic/Early Bronze Age horizon or horizons on or in its surface. From the Fyfod point of view, the important fact is a 'latest date' of around *c* 2000 BC for a phase which preceded the bulk of the section's (and valley bottom's?) deposit. This was a virtually sterile and structureless, thick layer of chocolate-brown humus, as recorded in 1962 above ?Early Bronze Age/?Beaker sherds. It was now seen more fully in 1995 stretching, with variations but basically as in Plate FWP66.XVI, right across the width of the enclosure from ditch to ditch and outside.

It remains unclear whether this layer results from long slow accumulation or a sudden circumstances (*LPP*, chapter 6); but it is interpreted as the product of either or both alluvium and/or colluvium deriving from cultivation of the slopes on either side but particularly on the north (Overton Down). In itself, the layer is not securely dated, though it lies stratigraphically between a small amount of EBA and early Roman material. Overlying an Early Bronze Age phase, however, completely devoid of Early Iron Age material, and sealed by early Romano-British material, it seems likely that the layer represents a process, perhaps an event, in the second millennium BC (*LPP*, chapter 15).

The bulk of the archaeological material came from an occupation layer apparently stretching across the combe on top of the thick humus deposit. In some places, indeed, it appeared to be on a land surface which had developed there. In the interim report, the equivalent material was identified by the excavator as similar to that from OD XII and therefore fourth century AD in date. Close examination of the material from the 1995 excavation highlights the almost total absence of characteristically late Romano-British artefacts and suggests, in contrast, that it is predominantly of first–second century AD date. Most of it came from under or in the bank of the enclosure, or from the make-up of the platform on the south west side of the enclosure (Figure FWP66.13). There is no doubt, therefore, that the enclosure itself is of late- or post-Roman date.

Possible context

Romano-British

A context for the first–second-century activity is provided locally by the early Roman phase of landscape organisation generally. Specific to the environs of the Down Barn enclosure is the first–second-century AD cultivation on Overton Down (*LPP*, chapter 6); the second-century phase underlying the fourth-century settlement on OD XII (FWP 64; *LPP*, chapter 6); and the early Romano-British material collected from the surface of settlement ODS (FWP 64; *LPP*, chapter 6), of which indeed this layer in the combe may be a part.

The enclosure itself remains something of a mystery, as it has been since its discovery. The total absence of material associated with it is puzzling, as is the total absence of any material later than late Romano-British apart from two or three medieval sherds. It might, of course, have been constructed for a use not requiring artefacts or generating discarded ones, such as an animal fold, and could therefore be of any date later than, say, *c* AD 400. The ready availability of medieval and post-medieval artefacts, especially pottery, as witnessed at *Raddun* and the Delling Enclosure (*LPP*, chapter 7; FWP 65), and their near-absence from the Down Barn enclosure, inclines interpretation towards its use in a post-Roman/pre-medieval phase, possibly one that was aceramic but more probably one in which, whatever the state of material culture, its use did not lead to the deposition and/or accumulation of rubbish. A cattle pen or sheep fold seems a likely purpose, beside a pond, on

marginal land between arable and pasture, and close to an intersection in local tracks and regional routes (*LPP*, figures 16.7 and 16.8).

Saxon–medieval

The enclosure, which could well be only the visible part of a wider complex, may, however, be one of the missing medieval sheep-cotes (*SL*, figure 41). Those ‘two or three stray medieval sherds’, only evidenced in that published phrase, may be the slight but significant evidence indicating that here is the Overton equivalent of *Raddun* (especially triangular enclosure C; FWP 65, Figure FWP65.6; *LPP*, chapter 7). That site, however, produced a lot of material. Nevertheless, the Down Barn enclosure may well be a medieval sheep-cote.

It may, however, have originated earlier and been abandoned, or originated earlier and lasted a long time. The Down Barn enclosure could well have originated in the Anglo-Saxon period, at a guess between the seventh and ninth centuries when pottery locally was at best scarce and before the tenth century charters which do not mention it. It is very near to two boundaries, and it may well have been referred to if it was relevant. An implication of the lack of post-Roman material is that, whatever the date of its use, it was disused and forgotten before the thirteenth century when pottery became common locally, even on Fyfield Down. This makes its absence on Overton Down, and from the Down Barn enclosure in particular, striking. Indeed, the two or three medieval sherds, perhaps indeed strays, draw attention to rather than dispute this absence on that line of argument. Even shepherds and cow-hands break the occasional jug and glass bottle out in the open, again as some of the post-medieval material at *Raddun* illustrates (*LPP*, chapter 7). Yet such evidence is completely lacking from the Down Barn enclosure, an oddity especially since the post-medieval habitation site at Down Barn itself is so near.

Interesting though the enclosure is in its own right, particularly in hinting at post-Roman elements in the landscape, the site is even more significant because of the underlying prehistoric stratigraphy to which the earthwork accidentally drew attention. The early phases, so convincingly stratified, point to the similarities with the buried evidence examined locally by Allen (*LPP*, chapter 14) and by Evans *et al* (1993) along the main valley. The evidence beneath this enclosure seems a downland equivalent to the latter, one with a high environmental potential whatever its chronological and cultural significance. The subsequent sequence is interpreted as illustrating large-scale and probably widespread erosion on the downs in the second millennium BC (*LPP*, chapters 9–11), a key factor, so it is argued, in understanding this landscape. A monument-led approach can, apparently, produce bonuses.

The Delling enclosure, a post-medieval farmstead, Fyfield Down

Location

This earthwork enclosure (Figures FWP66.9, FWP66.14) was discovered independently during field reconnaissance, though in fact it was published as an air photograph at about the same time (Hill 1961) with the suggestion that it was a medieval or Roman farmstead. Detailed field survey showed that, like its neighbour in Wroughton Mead (Figure FWP66.9; FWP65), it overlay early, probably prehistoric fields: the scarp dividing off its northern third is the lower edge of one such field. The enclosure was also shown to have a southern annexe. The whole looked, from experience, to be post-medieval, perhaps associated with the pillow-mound across the combe to its south (Figure FWP66.9). Despite its lack of a name, the enclosure was also considered as a candidate for the *Dyllinge* of the 1567 Pembroke Survey and possible precursor to the extant Delling cottage, 300m to the north and built between 1811 and 1819. While this earthwork enclosure is in Lockeridge, however, the Delling cottage is in Fyfield. Its enclosing boundary spans the tithing boundary (*LPP*, chapter 10).

Dating the relict earthwork enclosure by archaeological means was hardly likely to add to precision in providing a *terminus ante quem* for early fields – our main interest at the time in the early 1960s, – but it nevertheless seemed that a useful purpose would be served by dating the enclosure itself, particularly if it really was post-medieval. That period was not known to be represented archaeologically on the Downs by an archaeological, *sensu* abandoned, settlement.

Excavation

In fact, unknown to this writer, the enclosure had already been the subject of a small excavation in the mid-1950s by (now Colonel) Anthony Witheridge, then a schoolboy at Marlborough College. He thought the site might be ‘Iron Age’, cut two small trenches through its bank and ditch, and did no more when the three sherds he found looked to be medieval or later. It was interesting to hear his account in 1996.

A further small excavation was carried out by boys from Marlborough College under the supervision of John Scantlebury at the suggestion of the writer. Records and master have disappeared, and all attempts to locate both have failed. The following is based on memory, checked as far as possible on the ground early in 1996. A small cutting, of which the outline was found in 1996, was dug at the foot and towards the western end of the scarp underlying the enclosure. The exact point was in the centre of the slight depression below that scarp, opposite a platform above the scarp which appeared to be the foundations of a building. Both *c* 1960 and in February 1996, brick fragments were observed on the surface, suggesting the nature of these foundations and the post-medieval date of the structure. It was guessed that, if a building, possibly a house, had stood there, then its rubbish would have been thrown downhill into the depression. It was.

Finds

The cutting was clearly into the top of a midden or rubbish tip. It quickly produced, close under the modern turf, a quantity (a bucketful or cardboard boxful?) of quite fresh, unabraded, wheelmade sherds which this author saw once on site. They consisted memorably of quite large pieces and of yellow, internally glazed pottery with S-graffito brown decoration. There is no memory of any other material except possibly some animal bones. Clearly the assemblage was post-medieval, probably seventeenth century and perhaps sixteenth century (by analogy with material then being excavated from *Raddun*, Cutting 10; FWP 65); but apparently with nothing later. The date of the enclosure seemed to have been established. Since there was no wish either to extend the excavation or involve the College in a long-term excavation commitment, the exercise was stopped and the trench was filled in.

Comment

Obviously, the sequel to the excavation is unsatisfactory and it is not a happy experience to attempt writing an excavation note, however small its canvass and insignificant its import, from memory across a generation. If memory is correct, however, the main point of the exercise stands and very little damage has been done. The Delling enclosure would have gone into this account as post-medieval anyway, and the suggestion made that it could be the site of the documented late-sixteenth-century *Dyllinge*. Nothing in the memory about the small excavation gainsays that interpretation and, if anything, a date around AD 1600 is that more secure. The point, furthermore, is checkable, and enough material for a proper ceramic appraisal could easily be obtained; though the enclosure is now within the Scheduled area.

The northern downs: non-Project excavations

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

Chambered long barrow, Temple Bottom, Ogbourne St Andrew

Grid Ref: SU14867251. Excavated 1861. Refs: *VCHI* I, 1, 1957, 142, no G19; Barker 1985, no 6

Like Devil's Den long barrow, it lay slightly to one side of the centre of the floor of a dry valley, Temple Bottom ('Temple' from Templars, *LPP*, chapter 10, Figure 16.3). Described by Hoare in 1821 as comparable to the Devil's Den, it was excavated by Lukis and Smith and recorded in 1864 as a low mound of earth 47ft (*c* 14.3m) in diameter overlain by sarsen stones; but the record overall is unclear and conflicting, it not even being certain whether the mound was round or long and whether one or two chambers were present. Three artefacts were recovered, a bone gouge (?primary burial), calcined bones (?intrusive secondary burial), and fragments of coarse pottery. The monument has been destroyed.

Round barrow, Avebury Down, Avebury

Grid ref. SU 12627128 Ref: Birmingham 1960

The excavation for the Ministry of Works in 1960 of a small round barrow has not been fully published. The mound, an isolated one not part of one of the barrow groups along the edge of the Marlborough Downs (*LPP*, chapter 2), lay close to the Ridgeway and just south of linear ditch F4. Its primary burial comprised a cinerary urn in the centre of the mound, and sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the ditch fill.

Manton Down lies immediately outside the parochial study area, but its potential contribution to the understanding of the downland landscape required its inclusion. Two non-Project excavations were therefore noted. The Down was old grassland until the 1950s when it was largely returned to arable. Consequently it produces crop- and soil-marks not seen elsewhere on the high downs (shown in the top right hand corner of Map 1). Archaeologically, the chronological depth ranges from modern race-horse gallops through ridge-and-furrow and 13th century activity at the Beeches to a prehistoric field system, here discerned for the first time, and the Manton Down long barrow.

Medieval mound, Manton Down, Preshute

Grid Ref. SU 14617176 Excavated in 1949. Ref: Meyrick 1950

Several sherds of medieval pottery were noted on a mound near 'the Beeches' wood on Manton Down (*LPP*, figure 5.4). Excavation uncovered a substantial layer of Clay-with-flints with a protruding sarsen, overlaid by dark earth with red patches. No signs of structural remains were evident. The mound was 23ft (*c* 7.0m) in diameter, and of dark earth of 2–3ft (*c* 0.60–0.90m) thick. A large number of medieval potsherds were discovered, also a whetstone, nails and other ironwork, which suggested a thirteenth-century date for the mound. The date places this site as contemporary with *Raddun* on Fyfield Down (FWP 65). The excavation details do not, however, clarify its purpose though the amount of pottery and other material indicates habitation there, or close by (the mound may have been a rubbish heap). It is suggested in *SL*, figure 41 that the site may have been a sheep-cote.

Long barrow, Manton Down, Preshute

Grid ref: SU 15137140 Excavated 1955. Ref: Barker 1985, no 4

The long barrow lay on a north east-facing slope just above the floor of a dry combe between Manton House and the Beeches (Figure FWP66.15). Its exact position is queried by Barker (1985, 12) so it needs to be stated categorically that his proposed location is wrong. Its proper location (SU15137140) is where it always has been, that is where it was shown to exist on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map in the 1880s and large scale maps until recently. Megalithic remains of the barrow itself, however, looking as if freshly dumped and not totally unlike the disturbed remains of a chambered tomb (*SL*, figure 20), were noted in 1996 in the ‘Old Chalk Pit’ of earlier twentieth century Ordnance Survey maps, the ‘Pit (dis)’ of current maps (close to Barker’s NGR, so perhaps other remains had been dumped there earlier leading to the confusion). Of the mound itself there is now no superficial trace *in situ*.

Of megalithic form and *c* 25m long, the barrow was aligned south south east–north north west. Its former appearance, nature and structure are reasonably well documented in antiquarian literature, conveniently and accurately summarised in Barker (1985) who also describes and illustrates the unpublished excavation by Richard Atkinson in 1955 which followed severe damage to the barrow when and after it was ploughed over (in 1952). In the barrow interior were an ox-skull, perhaps from a pole-axed beast, and sherds of Neolithic (‘Windmill Hill’) pottery. Sarsens at the entrance, and underlying depressions which were probably natural, did not resolve the question of an entrance structure but the barrow was almost certainly chambered.

The barrow’s relatively low-lying position was in marked contrast to the prominent hilltop situations of other long barrows in the area (Barker 1985, *passim*) and more analogous to that of similar megalithic structures nearby in Temple (see *Chambered long barrow, Temple Bottom, Ogbourne St Andrew*) and Clatford (see *Devil’s Den, Clatford Bottom, Preshute*) Bottoms. Its location also accords with a model seeking to explain the positioning of long barrows in the area (Figure FWP66.XVII). The barrow later came to lie within a field system, as strikingly revealed by aerial photography (Plate FWP66.XVII). Its position became a fixed point in the evolution of a humanised landscape as the mound was used to mark the corner of a field within a clearly defined prehistoric field system. The visible fields are later than the long barrow although theoretically they could still be Neolithic; they are also of a smaller and more compact nature in the vicinity of the long barrow than elsewhere in the system (Figure FWP66.15).

Site of the Experimental Earthwork, Overton Down

Grid ref. SU 13007065 Ref: Bell *et al* 1996

Excavation here (*LPP*, plate lxi) was not part of the Fyfod project nor was it carried out to address questions about the local landscape. Nevertheless, the earthwork lies within the field archaeology of Overton Down where it ‘is sited near the edge of successive arable fields [‘Celtic’ and medieval] which, though separated in time by a millennium, ended along approximately the same ill-defined line.’ (Fowler 1963a, 64–6).

Preparation of the ground for the construction of the earthwork in 1960 involved stripping down to the surface of the Upper Chalk. On five subsequent occasions (1962, 1964, 1968, 1976 and 1992) a proper archaeological excavation of the earthwork was conducted (Jewell 1963b; Bell *et al* 1996). No archaeological features were visible on the site before work began, however, and none have so far been found during the excavations. A small amount of archaeological material has nevertheless been recorded, the potsherds being exclusively Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Romano-British.

Two natural subsoil features, like others excavated on both Overton and Fyfield Downs, were interpreted as tree-holes and therefore likely to be among the earliest items in this landscape (Bell *et al* 1996, 76–7, 140). They almost certainly belonged to a woodland phase before the downs were significantly cleared of tree-cover. They pre-dated all other structures and are earlier than human activity, judging by the absence of the otherwise apparently ubiquitous flint flakes from their fillings. Overall, however, the ground disturbance involved in constructing and monitoring the experimental earthwork has resulted in virtually no archaeological damage, a gratifying result given the care with which the precise site was chosen.

The excavations suggest a low level of non-occupational activity on the spot the earthwork occupies. The artefacts recorded incidentally in conducting the experiment can be best explained by infrequent, or largely non-domestic, manuring of a lightly-used, perhaps locally marginal, area in late prehistoric and Roman times – in effect an interpretation similar to that initially suggested (Fowler 1963a, 64–6). Its location indeed seems to lie between structural remains of field systems, possibly retained as a patch of pasture in the increasingly organised landscapes from the second millennium BC onwards.

Round barrow, North Farm, West Overton

Grid Ref: SU 13866861. Excavated in 1987. Ref: *WAM* 82, 181–1

This barrow is one of an extensive group of ploughed out barrows and ring-ditches north of the river Kennet (Map 1; *LPP*, figure 2.4, Barrow Group K, also illustrated in *SL*, figure 21). Earliest activity on the site seems to be Late Neolithic in date, when the apparently dismembered and incomplete body of a male was deposited in a pit. A body of early Beaker date was then deposited, crouched with the head pointing east. A few pottery fragments were found related to this burial. These burials were then covered by a barrow, surrounded by a ditch, precisely what did not happen over a similar Beaker burial, or burials, on Overton Down at site OD XI 1.5km to the north west (*LPP*, chapter 6; FWP 63). The site shows signs of ploughing above this, which may well have happened at OD XI too, and of the remains of another turf-line.

An Early Bronze Age burial of an adolescent was placed in the mound, with amber and jet beads, and around the same period, the body of a young infant. A larger mound was raised over them, with a deeper ditch. A Middle Bronze Age urn survived on the north side of the barrow, and in the Late Bronze Age cremation burials were placed in the south ditch. Two free-standing stones were placed to the south west of the barrow, perhaps marking the cremation cemetery. A Roman lynchet runs across the site, showing that agricultural activity has occurred around the barrow over a long chronological period. The environmental evidence from this site, summarised and used in *LPP*, chapter 14 with the permission of the excavator, Gillian Swanton, makes this a key excavation in the elucidation of the Fyfield and Overton landscape.

Roman burials, Overton Hill

Grid Ref: SU 118683. Excavated in 1962. Ref: Smith and Simpson 1964

Three small, low mounds, G6, G6a and G7, lay in a straight north–south line immediately east of the modern Ridgeway and only a short distance north of the Roman road from *Cunetio* to *Verlucio* (Plate FWP66.XVIII; Figure FWP66.16; *LPP*, figure 4.2). They are interpreted as part of a Roman landscape in *LPP*, chapter 4. They were destroyed by ploughing immediately after excavation.

The most northerly (G7) consisted of a mound 2ft (*c* 0.60m) high and ditch of external diameter 23ft (*c* 7m). Beneath the centre of the mound was a pit with sherds of Roman pottery. It had been disturbed and cut by an excavation trench. A slight bank of chalk rubble under the mound was the upcast from the ditch which was cut into the Chalk to a depth of 1–2ft (*c* 0.30–0.60m, and was 2ft

(c 0.60m) wide. It contained chalk rubble around circular features filled with brown soil, interpreted as the holes or 'pipes' where timber posts had stood. Oak charcoal was noted in the fill. A Saxon burial was in a grave dug into the Chalk on the north east line of the ditch.

The form of G6a was similar to that of G7, with a mound of external diameter of 15ft (c 4.5m), reaching a height of 1ft (c 0.30m). The ditch contained a similar fill, and cremated bone and potsherds were found in the mound material. A prehistoric pit was found to the south west of the burial.

G6 had similar dimensions to G6a, but the fill of the ditch was uniform, a brown soil. Modern excavation had cut into the Chalk subsoil through the mound.

The scatter of pottery in mound G6a suggested a date for the burials up to c AD 225. The remains of post-holes in the ditches of G7 and G6a showed that the original intention had been to build, not small, low mounds, but a conspicuous row of timber monuments for cremation burials.

Round barrow, Overton Hill

Grid Ref: SU 11966835 Excavated in 1962. Ref: Smith and Simpson 1966

Barrow G6b, north of the Seven Barrow (or Overton Hill) group and a few metres east of the Roman tombs (Plate FWP66.XVIII; Figure FWP66.16; *LPP*, chapter 4, figure 4.2), consisted of a central mound 20ft (c 6.1m) in diameter surrounded by a flint and sarsen bank; together they created a mound c 65ft (c 20m) across and at most c 4ft (c 1.2m) high. Centrally beneath it was a grey soil which overlay Chalk subsoil and a burial pit, covered by a turf stack; the grey soil did not occur elsewhere but a buried land surface underlay the mound. An irregular arrangement of sarsen boulders, the largest 3ft (c 0.90m) long, lay north west and south east, enclosed by the bank. There was no surrounding ditch. Of twelve burials in the barrow, a primary inhumation with Beaker and bronze awl dated to the ?sixteenth-century BC was in the central pit; five secondary inhumations included three children, and six cremations burials had been deposited in containers. At the north west side a pit contained blackthorn and hazel charcoal.

Several Saxon inhumation burials had been cut through the barrow into the Chalk subsoil, disturbing the Bronze Age inhumation burials but not the primary grave and mound.

Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Overton Hill

Grid Ref: SU 119683. Excavated in 1962. Refs: Smith and Simpson 1964; Eagles 1986

Five Anglo-Saxon inhumations were discovered when barrow G6b and Roman burial G7 were excavated (Plate FWP66.XVIII; Figure FWP66.16; *LPP*, chapter 4, figure 4.2). All five were cut into the chalk subsoil. At G6b, the burial of a woman, a male warrior of rank and two child inhumation burials were found. A child inhumation burial was found on the edge of G7.

Grave 1, of the male in G6b, contained a shield-boss, the form of which suggested a burial of the sixth century AD. An iron finger ring suggested a fifth–sixth century date, whilst spearheads were of typical of sixth century forms. The lug from a bronze cauldron was also found.

The Sanctuary, Overton Hill, Avebury

Grid Ref: SU 118678 Excavated in 1931, 1971, 1999. Ref: Pollard 1992

The Sanctuary stone circle (Plate FWP66.XVIII; Figure FWP66.16; *LPP*, chapter 4, figure 4.1) comprised a double concentric ring of stones, until it was destroyed in 1724. The outer stone circle was c 30m in diameter, and the inner c 10m. Pre-monument occupation of the site in the later

Neolithic is evidenced by *c* 50 sherds of Peterborough Ware pottery. Two phases of construction for the monument are broadly recognised. Originally, a timber structure was built with five concentric circles of upright timbers, later replaced by monument of stones. Sherds of Grooved Ware pottery occur in primary contexts on the site.

A burial of a juvenile, crouched, together with a Barbed Wire Beaker was found in a grave adjacent to stone-hole C12, placed chronologically after the stone settings. From the pottery found at the Sanctuary, a date for the construction of the monument has been suggested for around 2500 BC (uncalibrated). It bears many similarities to henge monuments in the vicinity such as Woodhenge, or site IV, Mount Pleasant. If this date is correct, then its construction was contemporary with a period of intensive building in the Avebury area. Distribution and deposition of material on the site, particularly flint and ceramics, show a higher frequency around the eastern segment of the circle, either side of an eastern entrance. The modern track called the Ridgeway passes by immediately outside. It is conceivable, as imagined in *SL* (p123), that visitors to the Sanctuary may well have approached along an early version of it through an unenclosed landscape in the later third millennium BC. Interpretation of the whole site is, however, once more under review in the light of renewed excavation in 1999.

Devil's Den, Clatford Bottom, Preshute

Grid Ref SU 15206965 Excavated 1921, 1955. Refs. *VCHI*, 1, 142, no. 3a; Barker 1985, no 5

The remains of a chambered long barrow lie on a slight elevation near the foot of the western slope of Clatford Bottom, just above the floor a dry valley perhaps formerly called 'Dillion's Dene' (?hence Devil's Den; Fowler and Sharp 1990, plate on p 190). The site is now marked by a prominent 'cromlech' constructed in 1921 under the guidance of A D Passmore (*SL*, figure 18), representing the chambered tomb which was once at the south eastern end of a mound perhaps as much as *c* 70m long and 40m wide, significantly larger than the West Woods long barrow (see *Long barrow, West Woods*). There is no sign of a ditch or ditches, or, now, even of the mound.

Nor, in keeping with the generally awful record of long barrow excavation hereabouts, is there any proper record of archaeological excavation. Passmore's digging was for consolidation purposes and produced no finds and no record of a turf-line even though the hole was dug, presumably through mound material, 4ft (*c* 1.2m) deep to Chalk; and a Piggott/Atkinson foray in search of traces of a forecourt has produced only three lines in Barker's account: '[they] spent two day's digging in the presumed forecourt area ... but found no evidence of stoneholes (Piggott, pers comm).' Nevertheless, some useful details have been published, summarised by Barker (1985). Our interpretation suggests its valley-bottom situation may relate to a peripheral position, as with all four of the chambered long barrows listed in this account, as a marker within a physically unenclosed but topographically defined landscape of 'long-barrow territories' (Figure FWP66.17; *LPP*, figures 5.4, 16.3).

In the valley and to its south: non-Project excavations

Soil profiles, North Farm

Grid Ref: SU 135684. Excavated in 1983–4. Ref: Evans *et al* 1993

Trenches were opened as part of a project to test the soil profiles of the Upper Kennet valley. Different soil profiles were noted. Earliest deposits were of tufa gravel, overlain by tufa and silt loam, which in one cutting (DN) was found to contain struck flint and bones of *Cervus elaphus*. This was overlain by a dark humic layer, then alluvial silt. The tusk of a wild boar found in cutting

D in the dark loam produced a radiocarbon determination of 8260 ± 60 BP (OxA-1044). Structural features were noted in a number of trenches. In the 'Avebury soils' of cutting DF, a pit containing cremated bone also contained fragments of later Bronze age pottery (Whittle in Evans *et al* 1993, 171–2, fig 32). In cutting DN a lynchet complex was noted in the Avebury soil, and in cutting C, two lines of sarsen stones resting in a calcite loam above the Avebury soils may be of Late Neolithic date (Evans *et al* 1993, 163).

Using molluscan remains in the soil samples, archaeological evidence and thermoluminescence dating of some sediments, environmental changes for the vicinity of West Overton were noted. Finds in the soils below the Avebury horizon showed signs of forest clearance, and layers of alluvial deposits. The formation of the Avebury soil seems to be linked to the Late Neolithic, with no sign of cultivation. The later soils, and the evidence of lynchets on the Avebury soil, have linked the later horizons with the Beaker period, showing signs of cultivation and build-up of alluvial deposits. The surface of those deposits bears evidence of much later disturbance, generally connected with water management (*cf LPP*, Plates LXII, LXIIIb).

Roman road, North Farm

Grid ref. SU 139685 Excavations 1997–8 Refs: *LPP*, chapter 2, Plate LXIIIa; *SL*, figure 67

Excavations by Gillian Swanton (with whose permission this note is included) are currently (1998) in train across and beside a parch-mark recorded in 1996 (Plate FWP66.XIX; *SL*, figure 67). This was interpreted then as confirming that the Roman road (Margary 53), assumed to be beneath the modern A4 as it passes in front of North Farm, continued straight on eastwards on to the valley floor of the River Kennet at the point where the A4 (and eighteenth-century toll road) kinks slightly north east to cross Piggledean. Such has proved to be the case by excavation but the evidence is not of one Roman *agger* as a single construction. Instead, a sequence of road structures continues eastwards the line of the A4 from North Farm on what now must be seriously considered as a Roman sarsen stone causeway across the Kennet flood plain.

The excavated roads point towards the former hollow-way called Piper's Lane 750m to the east south of Fyfield village. This, followed by the historic (late Saxon at latest) boundary between Fyfield and Lockeridge, and now by that of the civil parish of West Overton, has long been considered [at least by this writer] as marking the Roman road's continuation eastwards towards *Cunetio* and has indeed been taken as such in proposing a model for the topographical development of Fyfield village (*LPP*, chapter 11).

Strip lynchets, West Overton

Grid Ref: SU 13456820 Excavated in 1993. Ref: Powell *et al* 1996

These strip lynchets straddled the north west section of the Pound Field barrow, in the field across the road north east of St Michael's church, and they were cut through by a pipe-line trench. A shallow terrace was uncovered containing a high proportion of chalk rubble, and a dark yellow silty loam, overlaying the rubble.

The above publication refers to 'rig and furrow earthworks' west of these strip lynchets. The feature is in fact an area of abandoned allotment gardens, operational in 1924 when they were incidentally recorded on an air photograph (*LPP*, plate XLVII).

Round barrow, West Overton

Grid Ref: SU 13406822. Excavated in 1993. Ref: Powell *et al* 1996

The Pound Field Barrow was recognised on aerial photographs and was excavated before the laying of a pipeline (Powell *et al* 1996, 15–26, figs 6, 7). It was 100m north east of St Michael's church, West Overton. The external diameter of the feature was 33.5m. A ditch cut into the subsoil 5.5m wide and 1.2m deep was filled with brown, silty clay. A greyish–brown layer of silty clay was found to lie on the subsoil of the barrow interior, containing a flint blade and charcoal. Chalk rubble then covered this layer. The charcoal was from oak and hazel, suggesting a lightly wooded area in the barrow's vicinity at the time of construction. Potsherds in the fill of the ring-ditch were of either Iron Age or early Anglo-Saxon origin. Though some doubts about context attach to this account, the excavation is of local significance in providing rare information from the south side of the Kennet valley.

Church, deserted medieval village, Shaw

Grid ref: SU 139653. Excavated 1929. Refs: Brentnall 1930; Clark Maxwell 1930

Visible as a low, grass-covered mound, then and still (Plate FWP66.XX; *LPP*, chapter 13), the remains of the church were only partly examined in what was clearly, not least from the silent witness of the published photographs, a small-scale and technically-limited excavation by masters and boys from Marlborough College. The site is on Clay-with-flints on the western edge of West Woods in an area with archaeological evidence of activity from Mesolithic times onwards.

Internally 33 x 16ft (*c* 10 x 4.9m), with no chancel, the church nave survived in outline defined by flint walls still standing 2–3ft (0.6–0.9m high in places with some sarsen coins and facing stones still in place at key points. Inner wall footings had been laid in a trench; outer footings apparently just rested on soil. The floor comprised flints rammed into the clay, covered with beaten chalk; but no flagging was found. The base of a slightly off-centre altar, 4 x 2ft (*c* 1.2 x 0.6m), lay against the east wall. A doorway in the north wall was 2ft (0.6m) wide; a dripstone on the southern interior suggested a south door. On the south too were found a complete stone window surround and the parts of a complete hood for half a window. The whole was covered by flint rubble, presumably the non-organic part of walls once 3–4m high and originally held in a matrix of 'clunch' or weak lime mortar.

Indeed, perhaps much more suggestively than the excavator realised, the evidence exposed seems to represent the debris resulting from a deliberate robbing and ruination of the church. The absence of a floor (flag-stones?) and most architectural fittings, plus the state of the walls, are strongly indicative. And in its way, the fact that some fragments were found, all broken except for the remarkable window, reinforces this interpretation: they were what the demolition men knowingly left behind because they were no use for the repair or new building work to which the materials were being taken. The excavator's starting point (Brentnall 1930) was a local story that Shaw church had been removed and rebuilt at one of the Altons in the Vale of Pewsey below.

No coins were found but 'A number of sherds of the familiar medieval green glaze turned up, particularly outside the west wall.' These sound as if they were of one of the types recorded at *Raddun* (FWP 65), suggesting a thirteenth-century date, though at least one fabric may continue into the early fourteenth century. The architectural pieces recovered on the site indicate a date in the early fourteenth century for the construction of the church. A backgammon board on a broken slab from the altar (Clark Maxwell 1930) was, one hopes, scratched by the demolishers rather than the builders but has not been closely dated. The ambiguities of the documentary evidence are such, concluded the excavator himself, that that source cannot clarify the issue of date. We therefore propose that, until proved otherwise, Shaw church is interpreted as having been founded in the later thirteenth century and demolished between one and two centuries later, perhaps in the early fifteenth century. It is very probable that it was a late addition to a settlement site, the surviving and plottable earthworks of which present, at one and the same time, an image of a classic medieval

deserted street village and an inter-related complex clearly containing different elements of various dates (FWP66.18).

Long barrow, West Woods

Grid ref: SU 15696563. Excavated c.1880. Refs: *VCH* I, 1, 145, W Overton 12; Barker 1985, no 10

The barrow's principal features are clear (*contra* Barker 1985, 18) since it stands proud at the head of a slight eastern slope in managed woodland with well-spaced beech trees, though some trees stand on it (Plate FWP66.XXI; *LPP*, plate LVIII; *SL* 26). The 210m contour crosses the eastern summit of a fine mound, its highest point 4.3 m above ground level (Figure FWP66.19; *LPP*, chapter 12, figure 12.2, the first published plan of this barrow). The oval-shaped mound is 40m long and 33m wide, with side ditches of crescentic plan along each side, respectively 43m long and 10m wide on the north side and 39m wide and 12m wide on the south. A shallow extension 17m long has been dug north eastwards from the eastern end of the southern ditch, spoiling the overall symmetry in plan and leaving only a narrow eastern causeway. The ditch does not, however, go round this eastern end (*contra* Grinsell in *VCH* I, 1,145). The original western causeway is 20m wide.

The mound appears to have suffered only superficial disturbance on its top ('Ex' on Figure FWP66.19) but it was in fact surreptitiously trenched from the north about 1880, as it indeed proved possible to record in plan. 'At this point' recorded Passmore (1923) from a participant, 'a small cairn of small sarsen stones was reached. In the centre of this was a dolmen consisting of four upright stones (the spaces between which were packed with flints) and a capstone covering them, all of sarsen'. Inside was 'certain black matter ... The inside of the dolmen was about 6 feet by 3 feet, its longer axis coinciding with that of the barrow..... it was left undisturbed, the capstone being replaced in its old position, and the excavation filled in.' There were no finds. Although a formal excavation report was never published, it says much for the standard of antiquarian endeavour that that second-hand account is the best for a megalithic barrow excavation in the area until that for West Kennet long barrow (Piggott 1963).

Morphologically quite unlike the classic rectilinear long barrows at nearby East and West Kennet, as a plan-type it does not feature in Ashbee (1984, chapter 3) but it has close parallels in Hampshire (RCHME 1979, fig 2, nos 14 and 15; fig. 3, nos 19, 20) and West Sussex. North Marden (Drewett 1986) in particular, though smaller, is almost an exact mirror image in plan. Though slightly wedge-shaped and lacking the distinctive curving side ditches, the newly discovered White Barrow 2km away on the hill above Lockeridge Dene (*SL*, colour plate 25) is of similar size. It is tempting to envisage both long and oval barrows existing in forest clearings rather than on open hills in the fourth millennium BC (*cf* Barker 1985, no10), and we argue elsewhere (*LPP*, chapter 16) that one way of looking at them in this landscape is as markers on the edges of community territories (Figure FWP66.17).

East Wansdyke, Red Shore and New Buildings, Alton and Savernake

Grid Ref: SU 117648 and SU 193665. Excavated 1966–1970. Ref: Green 1971

Excavations through the bank and ditch of East Wansdyke at Red Shore and of the bank alone at New Buildings showed marked differences in its structure and in the pollen evidence from each site. At Red Shore, a short distance south west of the south west corner of West Overton parish, the point for excavation was chosen because, as in much of our own project, a visible opportunity for tying an absolute to a relative chronology was observed: 'Celtic' field lynchets ran under the bank of the Dyke. The bank itself at this point was c 9.5m wide and 2m high, made up of dump construction from ditch material, mainly Clay-with-flints. A mull layer high up in the bank stratigraphy was interpreted as of deposited turves from where the ditch was cut, a process which would have involved stacking such turves until needed because, of course, they would have been removed

before the body of the ditch. The ditch was V-shaped, with the original bottom at a depth of 3.90m. A number of layers of silt deposition and flint nodules had built up in the ditch.

The smaller trench at New Buildings, east of the study area into former Forest land, cut partially through the bank and showed a different stratigraphy comprising redeposited topsoil, red clay and black layers. Differences between the two areas are highlighted by the pollen evidence. At Red Shore, high profiles of grasses, bracken and plantain suggested use of the area for pasture at the time of the Dyke's construction. At New Buildings, evidence of hazel, oak, grasses and ribwort plantain, also fern in higher deposits, showed the long-established nature of Savernake Forest and the lack of any extent of pasture vegetation.

The date of construction for Wansdyke is ambiguous from archaeological evidence. Sherds of samian pottery in the bank material, and a penannular brooch, suggested post-Roman construction as had been the case in Pitt-Rivers' excavations a little further west of Red Shore. Dates of AD 450–500 or AD 550–600 were suggested, on documentary rather than archaeological grounds. Fowler (forthcoming c), describing the length of Wansdyke through West Woods, between Green's two sections, opts very firmly on historical ground for *c* AD 500.