

Manor Farm
Kingston Deverill
Wiltshire.

A Programme of archaeological
recording and erosion repair on three
Scheduled Bronze Age Barrows.



March 2017



**Manor Farm
Kingston Deverill
Wiltshire**

for

COAS project code: C1/SUR/14/MKW

R. F. Stratton & Company

Report

Prepared by Richard McConnell, Projects Director
Date 16/03/17

Internal review by Cheryl Green, Post-excavation Manager
Signed

Date 16/03/17

Issue 01

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Summary

Context One Archaeological Services carried out a programme of archaeological recording and erosion repair on three Scheduled Bronze Age barrows at Manor Farm, Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire between June and July 2015. The project was commissioned by R. F. Stratton & Company as part of a Natural England Higher Level Stewardship scheme under the auspices of Historic England.

All three barrows sit in a rich prehistoric landscape where Bronze Age funerary monuments occupy the surrounding ridgelines and valley floors. Despite many being the subject of antiquarian excavation or denudation through millennia of agricultural activity, those that have survived are an enduring and visible legacy of an important period in prehistory. As such, it is incumbent to extend their protection for future generations.

Two of the barrows occupied locations on the valley floor and there is evidence to suggest that they had suffered erosion from livestock grazing over several decades at least. The smaller barrow on Whitepits Down had seen modest damage and was probably the result of a much less intensive grazing regime on the steep slopes. Repair work included creating bunds of chalk-filled sandbags on the lower edges of deep scars to support loose chalk infilling and topsoil covering. A lightweight conveyor was used to transport chalk and soil to the erosion scars to minimise further damage to the monuments. The barrows were re-seeded with grass upon completion of the works. A programme of aftercare monitoring visits was carried out in 2015 and throughout 2016.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) were instructed to carry out a programme of archaeological recording and erosion repair on three Scheduled Bronze Age barrows at Manor Farm, Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire between June and July 2015. This was followed by regular aftercare monitoring visits in 2015 and throughout 2016. The project was commissioned by R. F. Stratton & Company as part of a Natural England Higher Level Stewardship scheme (Ref. AG00444972). The work was carried out under the auspices of Nick Croxson, Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Historic England.

1.2 The barrows are designated Scheduled Monuments and protected under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979 (as amended, 1983). They comprise the following:

- Bowl barrow 125m south of Dairy Farm (No. 1010401)
- Bowl barrow 250m north of Truncombe Wood (No. 1010402)
- Three bowl barrows on Whitepits Down (No. 1012164) – only the western barrow was subject to erosion repair

All three barrows had suffered erosion through livestock grazing to varying degrees. Indeed, for this reason, barrows 101402 and 1010401 were listed as being at High Risk on the national Heritage at Risk register. The work accords with Historic England's commitment to Government to reduce the number of heritage assets at risk.

1.3 The objective of the programme of work was to repair all three monuments by infilling the erosion scars and establish healthy grass cover over the barrow mounds. As part of a future management strategy, the barrows will be returned to intermittent livestock grazing following a period of exclusion.

1.3 The programme of archaeological works comprised five elements: the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which set out the project strategy; desk-based assessment; condition survey; archaeological recording; ground works to repair monuments; final report production; and aftercare monitoring. The WSI supported separate Scheduled Monument Consent applications for the programme of works (SMC references: 1010401, 1010402 and 1012164).

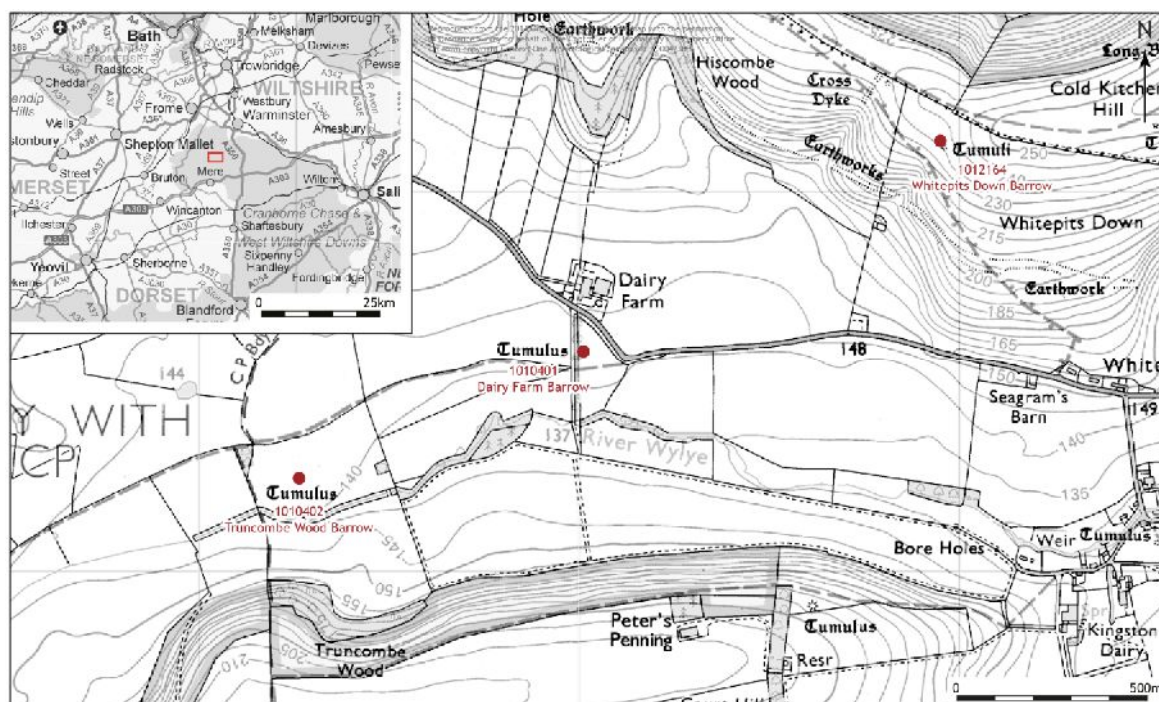


Figure 1. Site setting and barrow locations

2. Archaeological background

- 2.1 The archaeological background for each barrow draws together information from both primary and secondary sources from various repositories including the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Salisbury Library (Local Studies), Historic England online data, and the Context One library.
- 2.2 All three barrows sit in a rich prehistoric landscape where Bronze Age funerary monuments occupy the surrounding ridgelines and valley floors. Despite many being the subject of antiquarian excavation or denudation through millennia of agricultural activity, those that have survived are an enduring and visible legacy of an important period in prehistory. Within a 15 kilometre square around the barrows (centred on ST 83500 37500) there are 19 Scheduled monuments or monument groups and this includes 16 extant Bronze Age barrows; a Neolithic long barrow; a Romano-Celtic temple with prehistoric midden; a Bronze Age cross dyke and linear boundary; medieval field systems and Iron Age and medieval strip lynchets.
- 2.3 Dairy Farm barrow and Truncombe Wood are situated on the valley floor c. 140m above Ordnance datum (aOD) just north of the River Wylde and to the south and south-west of Dairy Farm. Whitepits Down barrow is the southern-most monument of a group of three barrows on the steep south facing slope of Whitepits Down, the ridge of which is referred to as Cold Kitchen Hill. The barrow sits along the 235m aOD contour.

Bowl barrow 125m south of Dairy Farm (No. 1010401; NGR ST 8301 0 37577; Scheduled in 1927)

- 2.4 The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) describes the barrow as follows:

“The monument includes a bowl barrow set on level ground immediately north of the River Wylde. The barrow mound is 20m in diameter and stands to a height of 3.4m. Although no longer visible at ground level a ditch, from which material was quarried during the construction of the monument, surrounds the mound. This has become infilled over the years but survives as a buried feature c. 3m wide. The fence posts which traverse the monument from north to south are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath them is included.

The Dairy Farm bowl barrow is important as it survives particularly well, despite some limited stock erosion, and has significant potential for the recovery of archaeological remains. Its location on the floor of the Wylde Valley gives it added importance in terms of the possibility that waterlogged or organic remains may survive, particularly in the ditch. The significance of the site is further enhanced by the fact that numerous other round barrows survive in the area as well as additional evidence for contemporary settlement. Such evidence provides a clear indication of the extent to which the area was settled during the Bronze Age period.”

- 2.5 Aerial photographs demonstrate that until the 1970s, the barrow was situated in open fields. However, in the late 1970s/early 1980s a wooded field boundary running north to south was created and this ran alongside the western edge of the barrow with the fence line crossing the lower side of the mound.
- 2.6 Aerial images from 1981 appear to show livestock erosion damage to the north-western and eastern aspects of the barrow although similar photographs from 2001 demonstrate healthy grass cover.
- 2.7 The barrow was visited in November 1981 by Roy Canham (former County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council) who reported that the bowl barrow was well defined and under arable land-use (**HER¹ ref. ST83NW618**)

Bowl barrow 250m north of Truncombe Wood (No. 1010402; NGR ST 82262 37243; Scheduled in 1991)

- 2.8 The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) describes the barrow as follows:

“The monument includes a bowl barrow set on level ground immediately north of the River Wylde. The barrow mound is 29m in diameter and 3.75m high. Although no longer visible at ground level a ditch, from which

¹ Historic Environment Record

material was quarried during the construction of the monument, surrounds the mound. This has become infilled over the years but survives as a buried feature c. 3m wide.

The bowl barrow north of Truncombe Wood is important as it survives particularly well, despite some limited stock erosion, and has significant potential for the recovery of archaeological remains. Its location on the floor of the Wylve Valley gives it added importance in terms of the possibility that waterlogged or organic remains may survive, particularly in the ditch. The significance of the site is further enhanced by the fact that numerous other long barrows survive in the area as well as additional evidence for contemporary settlement. Such evidence provides a clear indication of the extent to which the area was settled during the Bronze Age period."

- 2.9 The antiquarian, Richard Colt-Hoare, writing in the early 19th century appears to describe this barrow. At this time there was a trackway between the village of Norton Ferris and Kingston Deverill that joined the modern road just below Dairy Farm. The line of the trackway, described on 19th century maps as 'supposed British Trackway' is now fossilised as hedgelines and field boundaries. Colt-Hoare refers to a barrow in a meadow on the right-hand side (south) of the lane beyond Rodmead Farm (still extant) and that it was '...remarkable for its size and fine shape: it has never been opened, and experience has taught us that our labour would be thrown away in attempting any barrows in similar damp situations.' (Colt-Hoare, 1975, 40). Colt-Hoare also provides anecdotal evidence that there were also two other barrows almost opposite the Truncombe Wood barrow on the northern side of the lane but that these had been levelled although he was told that, '...marks are still visible.' (*ibid.*). There is certainly no evidence to indicate this on aerial photographs today.



Plate 1. Oblique aerial view of Truncombe Wood barrow in 1994 showing damage from livestock grazing (Wiltshire County Council ref. AER 1171)

Truncombe Wood barrow was visited in 1970 by the Ordnance Survey who reported that the monument was well defined but damaged and under pasture (HER ref. **ST83NW617**). This certainly accords with aerial photographs taken in 1991 and 1994 which shows significant damage through livestock grazing (Plate 1 opposite).

Three bowl barrows on Whitepits Down (No. 1012164, ST 8395 3813, Scheduled in 1992). Repairs were carried out to the western barrow.

- 2.10 The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) describes the barrow as follows:

"The monument includes three bowl barrows set below the crest of a steep south-facing slope overlooking the upper Wylve Valley. The western barrow mound is 13m across and 0.7m high. Surrounding the mound is a ditch from which material was quarried during construction of the monument. This has become partly infilled over the years but survives as an earthwork 1.5m wide and 0.5m deep. A hollow in the centre of the mound is evidence of partial excavation of the site by Colt-Hoare in the 19th century. Abutting the north-east side of the ditch is a small bowl barrow 8m across and 0.5m high. The ditch surrounding the mound survives as a buried feature c. 2m wide on all but the south-west side of the mound. Some 10m to the south-east is a further bowl barrow. The mound is 9m across and 0.4m high while a ditch 1m wide and 0.3m deep can be seen to the south-east and survives as a buried feature elsewhere.

The Whitepits Down barrows survive well and, as a group, have potential for the recovery of archaeological evidence and environmental remains relating to the nature of Bronze Age society in the area and the landscape in which they lived.”

- 2.11 The barrow is recorded as being one of five barrows that were excavated on the south side of Cold Kitchen Hill (Whitepits Down) by Colt-Hoare in 1803 (*ibid.* 41). He describes the western barrow as having been opened before, possibly by another well-known antiquarian and contemporary, William Cunnington. Colt-Hoare notes the barrow as being the largest of the five investigated although his remarks point towards all being heavily denuded (*ibid.* 41). Colt-Hoare does not mention the barrow again suggesting that further excavation yielded no features or finds. By contrast three out of the remaining four barrows produced urned-cremations, burnt bone, ashes, charcoal and a brass pin (*ibid.* 41).
- 2.12 Leslie Grinsell inspected the barrow in 1955 and it is noted that he found a Beaker sherd (Middle to Late Bronze Age) with a roulette decoration on the mound (HER ref. ST83NW602, W.A.M, 1956).

3. Condition survey

- 3.1 Prior to restoration works, a condition survey was undertaken. This involved producing a scaled plan of the Dairy Farm and Truncombe Wood barrows showing the erosion scars and a representative scaled profile of the barrow itself (**Figures 2 and 3**). The more superficial nature of the Whitepits Down barrow erosion scars only required a photographic record. Photography of all three barrows comprised high resolution images using a Nikon digital SLR camera to document the erosion damage prior to the repair programme (see **Plates 2-11**). This included images taken from the ground and from an aerial perspective using a remote-controlled quadcopter fitted with an HD video and still camera. Video was also used to memorialise some of the restoration works.



Plate 2. Condition survey: Dairy Farm barrow from E (2m scale)



Plate 3. Condition Survey: Dairy Farm barrow from S (2m scale)



Plate 4. Condition Survey: Dairy Farm barrow from N (2m scale)



Plate 5. Condition Survey: Dairy Farm barrow from SW (2m scale)



Plate 6. Condition Survey: Truncombe Wood barrow from N (2m scale)



Plate 7. Condition Survey: Truncombe Wood barrow from W (2m scale)



Plate 8. Condition Survey: Truncombe Wood barrow from S (2m scale)



Plate 9. Condition Survey: Truncombe Wood barrow from W (2m scale)



Plate 10. Condition Survey: Whitepits Down barrow from SE (no scale)



Plate 11. Condition Survey: Whitepits Down barrow from NE (no scale)

- 3.2 The WSI prepared prior to the commencement of the project included detailed information relating to the archaeological methodology and covered all aspects of the investigation. This also conformed to the C1 Fieldwork Manual (2016); and the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), (December 2014). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site, and this included the preparation of a site-specific Risk Assessment.

4. Ground work repair to monuments

- 4.1 A wide working area around each barrow was cordoned off using hazard tape tied to a series of road pins during periods where hay cropping was carried out to create a visual barrier around the operational area. Loads of clean chalk with flint were dropped in piles on tarpaulins by trailer at regular intervals by the farm as it was required. Top soil was similarly dropped for a final dressing on the barrows once all the scars had been filled and compacted.
- 4.2 Two hawthorn trees growing on the western side of the Dairy Farm barrow (**Figure 2; Plate 12**), and one young hawthorn on Truncombe Wood (**Figure 3; Plate 13**) were cut down and the stumps treated to accelerate rotting. An old animal burrow on the south-eastern side of the Truncombe Wood barrow was lined with permeable membrane before being filled with chalk.



Plate 12. Hawthorn trees on Dairy Farm barrow from S



Plate 13. Young hawthorn tree on Truncombe Wood barrow from W

- 4.3 For the largest and deepest erosion scars on the valley barrows, a 'bund' was created on the lowest edge of the scar that effectively formed a dam so that the scar could be filled in front of it (**Plate 14**). The bund was shaped with chalk-filled hessian sacks. Each sack measured 0.78m x 0.33m and were standard bio-degradable sandbags with jute drawstrings. In some instances, it was necessary to seat a tall bund by grooving the scar surface to start the bund on a more level surface so that it would adequately support the dam of sacks.

Prior to bunding an erosion scar, the area was first laid with a 50gsm Terram Weed Control barrier so that there was a clear and enduring distinction between the repair work and the barrow mound. The barrier matting is however permeable to water, nutrients and airflow. Despite the matting having a textured finish, the chalk infilling often slid on the surface and was difficult to hold in place without further support from strategically placed hessian chalk sacks.

During these operations, there was some concern that the wheeling of barrows around the erosion scars to unload the sacks and loose chalk was putting unnecessary 'wear' on the erosion scars; this was exacerbated on wetter days. The sloping terrain of the mound also created slip hazards on the barrow mound.



Plate 14. Bunding the larger erosion scars in progress

As a result, COAS sought permission from Historic England to use an electric-powered conveyor to transport chalk sacks and loose chalk directly to the erosion scars. A 'Shifta' aluminium conveyor was selected for the work and this comprised conveyor sections each measuring 4.4m long that could be linked together to cover varying distances (**Plate 15**). Each section was equipped with a loading hopper and rubberised conveyor belt. The sections were supported on braked wheels and stands, and powered by a petrol generator. The conveyor ran between 20-28 metres per minute and was equipped with stop buttons at each end of the conveyor (**Plate 16 & 17**).



Plate 15. Bunding of Dairy Farm barrow and chalk in-filling complete



Plate 16. The 'Shifta' chalk and soil conveyor (Dairy Farm barrow)



Plate 17. Loading the conveyor with chalk

- 4.4 Once all the deep erosion scars were filled with chalk, each repaired area was compacted with a hand-held asphalt tamper with a 25cm square heavy metal plate. The conveyor was used to move soil to the repaired erosion scars and raked to match the adjacent mound profile before being firmed with the tamper. A grass seed mix was applied to the soil and the areas watered. Permanent fencing was subsequently erected around all three barrows. The condition survey and repair work is illustrated in **Plates 18-27**.



Plate 18. Aerial view of Dairy Farm barrow showing erosion scars



Plate 19. Erosion scars and animal tracks on Dairy Farm barrow from E



Plate 20. Dairy Farm barrow erosion scar repair work in progress from E



Plate 21. Soil landscaping over Dairy Farm barrow from E



Plate 22. Aerial view of Dairy Farm barrow on completion



Plate 23. Aerial view Truncombe Wood barrow showing erosion scars



Plate 24. Erosion scars and animal tracks on Truncombe Wood barrow from N



Plate 25. Truncombe Wood barrow erosion scar repair work in progress from NW



Plate 26. Soil ready for landscaping over Truncombe Wood barrow from N



Plate 27. Aerial view of Truncombe Wood barrow on completion



Plate 28. Whitepits Down barrow on completion from W

5. Aftercare

- 5.1 Following completion of the erosion repair work, 7 monitoring visits were carried out between July 2015 and June 2016 to inspect the barrows. Photographs were taken of each barrow replicating the views of images taken as part of the condition survey prior to repair.



Plate 29. Dairy Farm barrow from S (February, 2016)



Plate 30. Truncombe Wood barrow from N (February 2016)



Plate 31. Whitepits Down barrow from NW (March 2016)

6. Conclusions and recommendations

- 6.1 An antiquarian fascination with barrows highlighted a justification for their preservation and it is no surprise that they were one of the few categories of monuments that were regarded as nationally important and enjoyed statutory protection when the Ancient Monuments Protection Act was passed in 1882. Today, most barrows and other funerary monuments are protected through Scheduling under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979 (as amended). However, many are located on agricultural land and form part of working farms. While it might appear straightforward to simply cordon off monuments and permanently exclude them, this can give rise to the damaging effects of scrub/tree growth and burrowing animals. On pasture, most barrows are left open for livestock grazing and this can work well for land that is not intensively grazed and on less productive higher ground. However, this can be much less effective on richer pasture where livestock numbers might be high. In this scenario, sheep and cattle can create significant damage and impact; the barrows that were the focus of this project illustrates the sort of damage that can be caused through this action.
- 6.2 However, fortunately such damage can be offset by pro-active management which seeks to strike a balance between the needs of a working farm and the conservation of these important monuments. This project is a good example of achieving that balance. Following the completion of erosion repair, fencing has been erected around all three barrows. It is likely that this will stay in place as part of a long-term livestock grazing regime that will permit intermittent access to the monuments in order to maintain a continuous grass sward and restrict scrub growth without allowing enough time for damage to occur. This strategy is wholly supported and should ensure the integrity of the monuments into the future.
- 6.3 Throughout the course of this project, a number of observations were made and, in some cases, the strategy was altered to improve the methodology as work progressed. For future reference when considering similar projects, it is pertinent to discuss the adjustments to the methodology here. These are as follows:

Permeable membrane (terram)

- 6.4 A permeable membrane was laid on top of the erosion scars and inside any animal barrows as a precursor to infilling repair work and so that restoration could be 'permanently' distinguished from the original mound material. However, in practice the smooth finish of terram gave little purchase for the chalk infilling and required extra support to hold the chalk in place. It was also unclear as to the actual longevity of the terram

and its effectiveness in distinguishing repairs from the original mound material. It is therefore suggested that alternative methods might be explored if this is deemed necessary.

Infilling works

- 6.5 It was proposed to deliver the chalk around the valley barrows by wheelbarrowing material around the 'path' created by livestock that spiralled around the mounds. Notwithstanding the difficulties of pushing barrows on a slope, it soon became clear that the multitude of trips required to deliver chalk and soil to the erosion scars would exacerbate the impact on the scars. It was therefore proposed that a light-weight conveyor should be used to carry out this task and this worked incredibly well. The conveyor feet were supported on mats up the side of the mound and left no discernible imprint; accelerated the process of repair work; reduced unnecessary impact on the mound during works; and was also used effectively in filling sandbags.

Coir mesh

- 6.6 The combination of establishing chalk-filled sandbag bunds and compacting loose chalk and soil within the erosion scars provided a stable solution to bed the material into the erosion scars. However, this could be further improved by the addition of a geotextile erosion control matting (coir mesh) over the top of the repaired sections to bind the infilling and prevent animal burrowing. Coir mesh can also be pre-treated with grass seed should it be a financially viable option.

7. Archive

- 7.1 The project archive comprises electronic records, digital images and notes/sketch drawings. All relevant information from these sources has been incorporated into this report. As such, the digital archive will only be stored on the C1 cloud storage.
- 7.2 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations – <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>).

8. Acknowledgements

- 8.1 Context One would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

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 Nick Croxson (Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Historic England)
 The staff at R. F. Stratton & Company
 Brandon Hire

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Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1956

'Museum Report, 1954-55' in *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, **56**, p.182

Historic Maps

Andrew's and Drury's map of Wiltshire, 1773

Route of the Roman Road from Old Sarum to Kingston Deverill, 1821

Map of Kingston Deverill Farm, 1869

Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 25", sheet LVII.4/LVII.11, 1887

Kingston Deverill Farm, occupied by William Stratton, 1895

Ordnance Survey, 2nd edition, 25", sheet LVII.4/LVII.11, 1901

Ordnance Survey, 25", sheet LVII.4/LVII.11, edition of 1924

Ordnance Survey, 6", sheet LI.S.E, edition of 1926

Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, 121 – Wells and Frome, 1940

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Ordnance Survey, 1", edition of 1959

Aerial photographs

Vertical B&W image ref. 217016, Wiltshire County Council, 1971

Vertical B&W image ref. 4581136, 4481069, Wiltshire County Council, 1981

Vertical Colour image ref. 12291161, 12291135, Wiltshire County Council, 1991

Oblique B&W image ref. AER1168, AER1169, Wiltshire County Council, 1994

Vertical Colour image ref. 295, 315, Wiltshire County Council, 2001

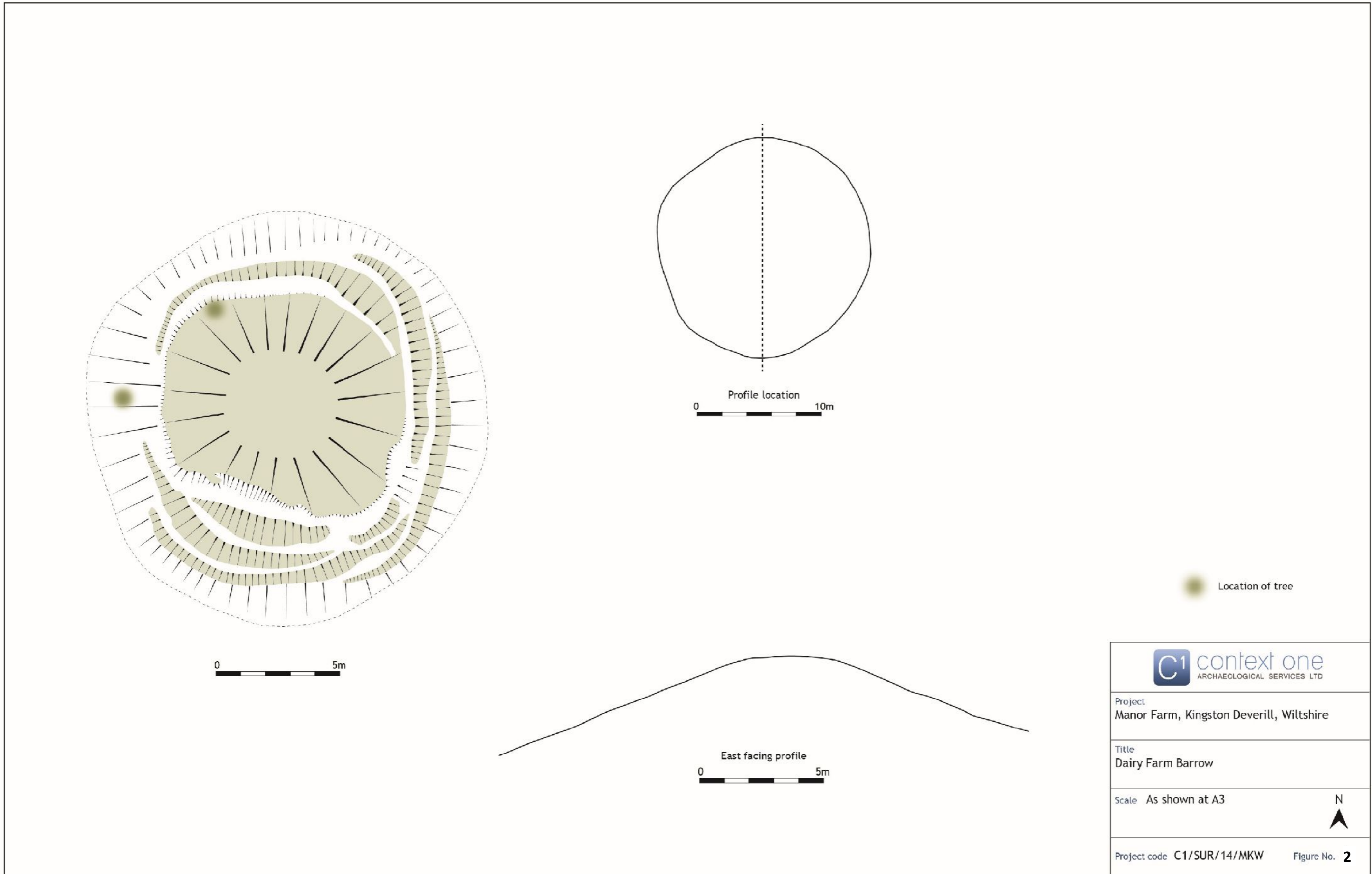


Figure 2. Profile and plan of Dairy Farm barrow

Project
Manor Farm, Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire

Title
Truncombe Wood Barrow

Scale As shown at A3



Project code C1/SUR/14/MKW Figure No. 3

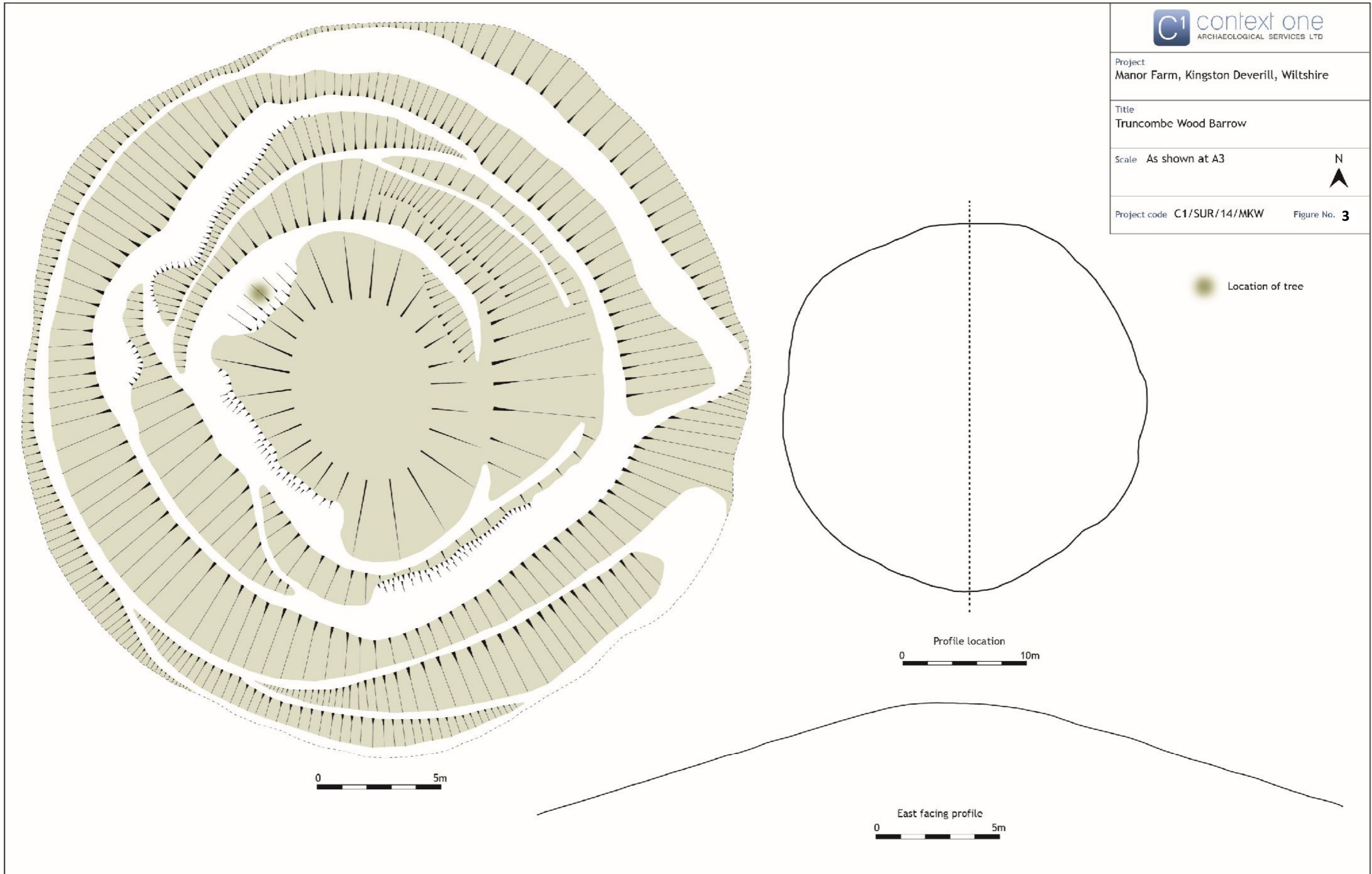


Figure 3. Profile and plan of Truncombe Wood barrow

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