



People of the Heath

Understanding and Conserving Petersfield's Prehistoric Barrows



Bulletin no 11

June 2017

A moment of slack between our recent seminar and the start of the final excavation of the People of the Heath campaign gives the opportunity for an update on the last few months' events and progress. A walk has taken place at Selhurst Park, micro-excavation of the Barrow 19 burial urn has been in full swing, a week of sieving and flotation of soil samples was facilitated at Fort Cumberland and the third season of the Regional Barrows Survey was completed – not to mention its culmination in a dedicated seminar in the Festival Hall – *A Profusion of Barrows*.

Barrow 19 urn excavation

No sooner had micro-excavation of the Barrow 8 urn been completed, than there was another to deal with, that lifted from the NE quadrant of Barrow 19. The context and lifting of this new presumptively burial pot has already been described in Bulletin 10. Our urn-excavating specialist (for that she is rapidly becoming), Jane King, expressed willingness to tackle the interior of this second urn. Much to our amazement, her lengthy stint on urn no 1 had not put her off. Before Jane could start, however, the urn needed to be CT scanned at Salisbury Hospital – thanks again to the generosity of Craig Jarvis and Orlando Carvalho for offering their time and expertise – and, this time, the exterior of the urn needed to be dealt with first. This was undertaken by the Research Director and Sheridan Bowman.

Why did the sequence need to be reversed this time? The Barrow 8 urn had been upright and, since the pot tapers to the bottom, the mass of soil inside was exerting pressure on a soft and very fragile ceramic vessel; it was therefore essential to keep the outer wrap in place for support until that pressure had been removed. The Barrow 19 urn, however, was inverted so the weight of its contents was really only exerting pressure on the wooden board which we had slid underneath. Moreover, we knew from site that the urn still had a series of discrete pottery sherds clinging to its sides, some at awkward and potentially vulnerable angles (Bulletin 10, fig 12). These were going to be difficult to remove quickly and laboratory excavation would allow more controlled excavation and recording. The pot was wrapped in such a way as to protect these protrusions before the lift and transportation, but it was obviously desirable to expose, record and remove these first in the laboratory.

Laboratory excavation may have facilitated careful recording (Fig 1), but it did not solve the puzzle of what these sherd groups were doing there. The sherds formed two layered clusters clinging to the west and south-east sides, a single large sherd in between being found to more or less link the two. However, in both clusters the sequence of layers included a single small sherd which looked as if it had been deliberately sandwiched between larger sherds to serve as a spacer.

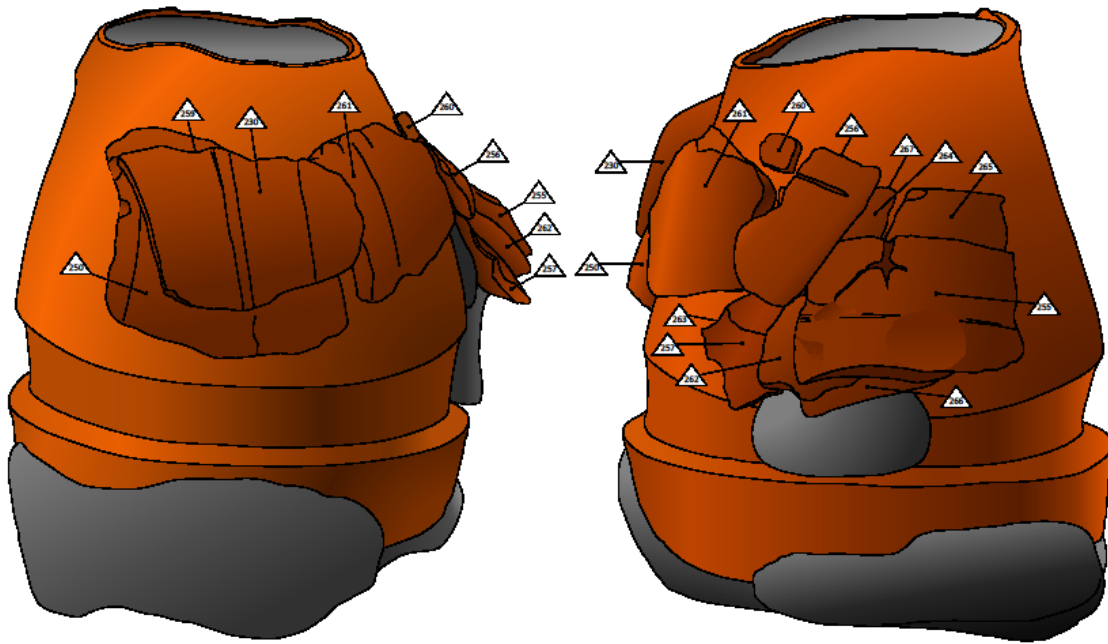


Figure 1 Plans of the sherd cladding around the Barrow 19 urn – viewed from the west (left) and south-east (right); the grey extrusions are of hardened sand. Drawing: Stuart Needham

Preliminary inspection of the sherds – both those attached to the pot and those more detached in the pit fill – suggests they may all belong to a single, second vessel, again a Collared Urn. But whereas the near-intact urn is undecorated, just like that from Barrow 8, many of the sherds show nice twisted cord impressions in repeating zigzags (Fig 2), a motif well-known in this ceramic tradition. Further study will show how much of this pot is represented. Much of the rim is present and the base found alongside – initially thought to be the missing base of the main pot – is likely to belong too.



Figure 2 Zigzag design impressed with twisted cord on the collar of the cladding pot-sherds. Image: Stuart Needham

CT scanning again proved to be an invaluable exercise. Not only did the results (Figs 3 & 4) give advance notice of the above-described sherd layering, but also of what lay within. There were three obvious features as well as more subtle variations in density. Firstly, the missing base seemed to be explained – it had been pushed inwards, the fractured remains lying about a third of the way down the pot. When and how this occurred we cannot say as yet, but this position immediately tells us that the pot was not full at the time of collapse, the uppermost third being a void. The second noteworthy feature was a cluster of bone-like pieces at a lower horizon. Craig Jarvis' processing of the CT data has brought out this 'package' of presumed cremated bone fragments evocatively (Fig 5). Thirdly, it appears that the hardened sand form we had encountered at the base (Fig 1), projecting well beyond the pot's mouth, will continue into the vessel as far as the base of the collar, forming a kind of plug (Fig 4). If, as suspected,

this is another example of mineral-replaced organics, it will have interesting ramifications for the closure of the pot prior to inversion.

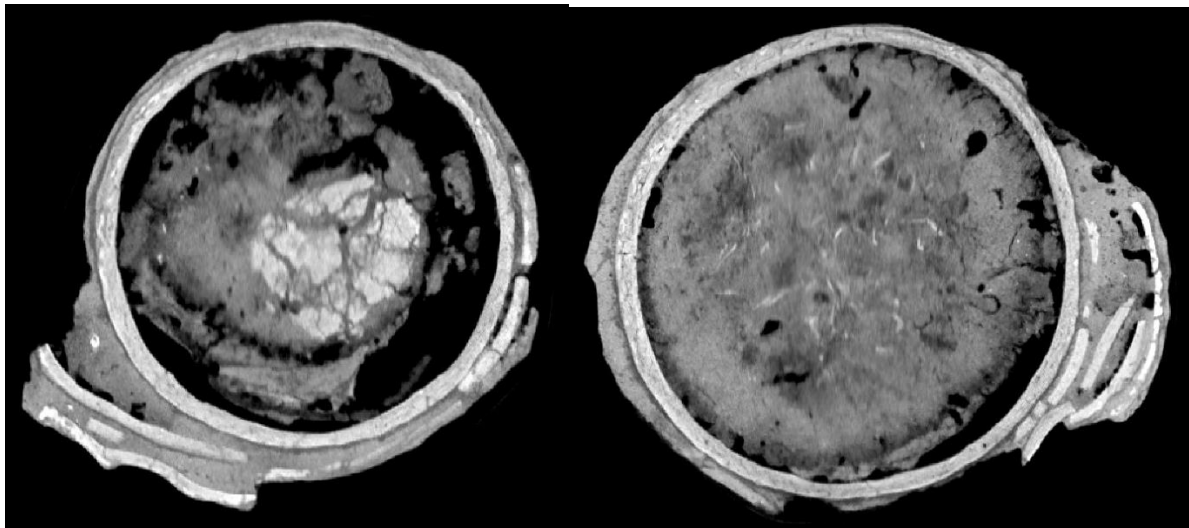


Figure 3 Horizontal scan slices through the urn at 11cm (left) and 18cm (right) below top; the collapsed pot base is visible at 11cm and the bone package is beginning to emerge at 18cm; cladding sherds are seen in both along with soil-filled interstices. Images processed by Garrard Cole from Salisbury Hospital data



Figure 4 Vertical slice through the inverted urn showing the collapsed base, the bone package (midway) and the denser material filling the collar zone of the vessel; the particular angle at which the pot stands is a consequence of the lifting process and is not the angle in the ground. Image: Craig Jarvis, Salisbury Hospital

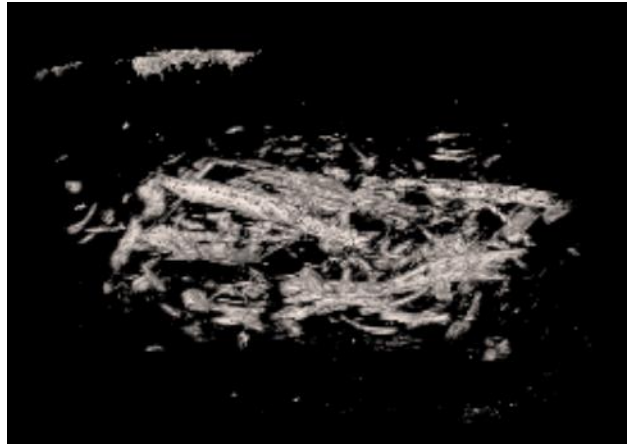
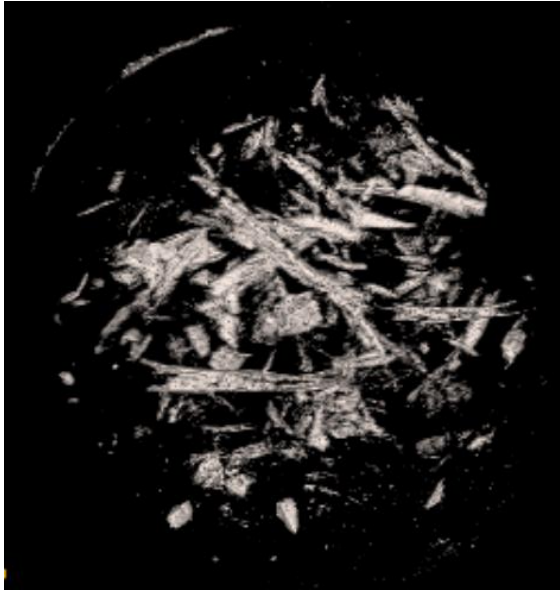


Figure 5 Filtered views of the central contents of the urn picking out the bone package in plan (left) and elevation (right). Scan data processed by Craig Jarvis, Salisbury Hospital

Partly because of this plug, and partly due to the need not to risk jumbling the contents, it was decided that Jane would have to excavate the interior through the broken base. This was not a decision taken lightly. The difficulty of seeing, recording and removing the contents through a narrow hole is profound and becomes the more so with every centimetre deeper reached. So far, however, the excavator is coping splendidly with this challenge. Without going into lengthy detail, Jane has reached the bone ‘package’ (Fig 6) having first encountered the layer of sherds representing the collapsed base. Needless to say, there have been other subtleties of fill change that will demand explanation and there may be evidence, as encountered in urn no 1, for some kind of inner organic container. The meticulous work goes on.



Figure 6 The middle of the bone package; cremated bones fragment during cremation and later recovery for deposition; it is hoped there will be some diagnostic pieces present; the upstanding pale material to the right appears to be part of an originally organic inner container. Image: Jane King

Selhurst Park Guided Walk, 24 March

A sunny, if chilly, day spent in the Selhurst Park Estate near Boxgrove in West Sussex provided the backdrop to a guided walk looking at the use and occupation of a downland landscape from prehistory to the present day. This stretched from the Neolithic flint mines on Long Down hill through to a hidden WWII auxiliary unit bunker, via Bronze Age field systems, Iron Age villages, Roman villas and a medieval deer park. History, scenic beauty, lively discussion and exercise all rolled into one – what could be better!

Sieving and flotation, 15-19 May

One of the inevitable by-products of modern archaeology is the amassing of large quantities of soil for laboratory processing. Apart from pollen columns and other specialised samples taken to Reading University by our palynological experts, most soil samples had merely been stockpiled awaiting the organising of flotation-cum-sieving programme. This was duly set up for a week in May, during the course of which 10 volunteers took part and gained great insight into both the process and the kinds of remains that can be recovered. We were fortunate in being able to make use of the high-spec facilities at Fort Cumberland, the home of Historic England's scientific laboratories, where we also had the benefit of specialist advice from Gill Campbell, Simon Mays, Matt Canti, Fay Worley and Ruth Pelling.

Highlights of the week were carefully sieving the cremated bone deposit from Barrow 13, the processing of the charcoal-rich deposits at the base of the ditch of enclosure Barrow 17, and the opportunity to look at the burnt roots of heather from the Barrow 11 turves under the microscope. Keep an eye out for further sessions down at Fort Cumberland later in the year – this is an archaeological experience not to be missed.

Regional Barrows Survey – results and provisional statistics

The third and final season of the Regional Barrows Survey ran between late October 2016 and the end of April 2017. Because more and more potential new sites were being recognised on the Lidar images, the intensity of fieldwork cranked up yet again. Even so, it was necessary to contract the boundaries of the 'Intensive Study Zone' from those initially defined in order to be sure that all sites inside received comparable treatment. A total of 510 sites (this may still change marginally) represents a near-75% increase on the sites recorded on Historic Environment Records at the start of the project. This has massive implications for our views of barrow density and detailed distribution in and around the Rother Valley. A large number of further sites were looked at on the ground and dismissed.

The revelation of this survey is not just the great increase in sites; many new groups of sites have tremendous significance in their own right and such cases were amongst the case-studies presented to the public at a seminar on Wednesday 14 June. A few can be mentioned here. The seminar was deliberately timed so as to fall between data collection and data crunching in order to better inform the forthcoming analysis process. We were privileged on the day to have several top experts in barrow studies, later prehistory and the archaeology of the region, people who were able to inject insightful comments into the discussion and make

comparisons with barrow-scapes elsewhere in Britain. Our local People of the Heath following also contributed ideas.

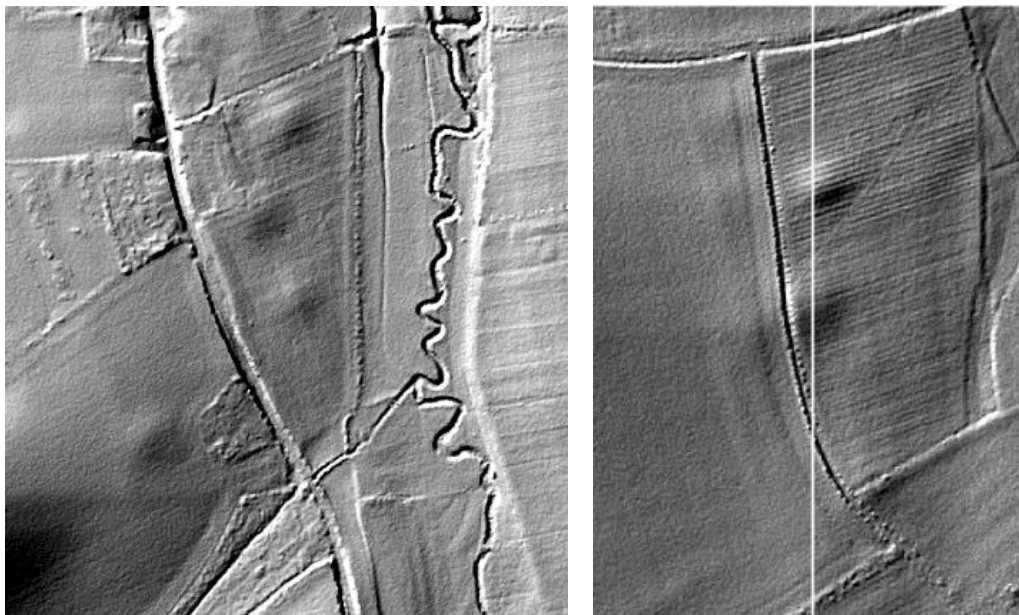


Figure 7 Lidar images showing the cores of new barrow cemeteries at Church Farm (left) and Parsonage Farm (right), near the sources of the River Meon, East Meon; a fifth barrow in the Church Farm group lies immediately north of the image in the cricket ground; in the Parsonage Farm group a marked distinction can be seen between the two barrows in long-term pasture east of the lane and three extremely denuded barrows still under regular ploughing to the west; the better preserved ones at both sites are overlain by medieval ridge-and-furrow. Images processed by Stuart Needham from Environment Agency data, lit from NW

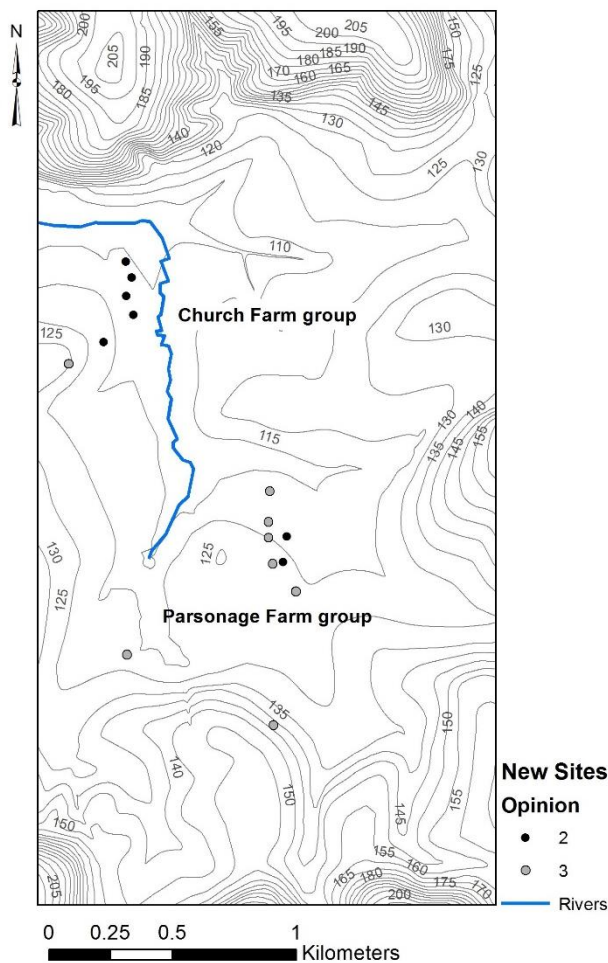


Figure 8 Map showing the two barrow groups in relation to one another and the topography; the less certain sites are those most denuded. Drawing: SabineStevenson

The biggest impression is made where whole new groups of barrows have emerged. This was the case for the Cranmer Pond cemetery previously reported (see separate report on the website) and is even more dramatically the case for the cemeteries that have emerged at the source of the River Meon and at Manor House, covered in the seminar by Jane King and Sabine Stevenson respectively. In some ways, these two complexes are in similar positions, situated close to water sources, an association now being recurrently recognised country-wide, but the detail is very different. Two groups of barrows have in fact been located around the head of the Meon, all plough-denuded to some extent (Fig 7). Those still suffering ploughing today are very low indeed but are still sometimes measurable; others

have been under pasture for some time and retain large bodies of soil, albeit much spread. Indeed, what came to light was that the better preserved examples in both cemeteries – Church Farm and Parsonage Farm – have probably not seen significant ploughing since medieval times, for two or three barrows have preserved ridge-and-furrow running over them (Fig 7)! These cemeteries are on low-lying, seasonally wet ground close to the two sources of the Meon, in what is almost a basin overlooked by steep-sided chalk hills on most sides (Fig 8). Some of these hills (Hyden Hill, Butser Hill, War Down) have their own barrow groups. Previously only three ring ditches (likely ploughed out barrows) had been recorded in the basin and two of these are actually open to doubt.

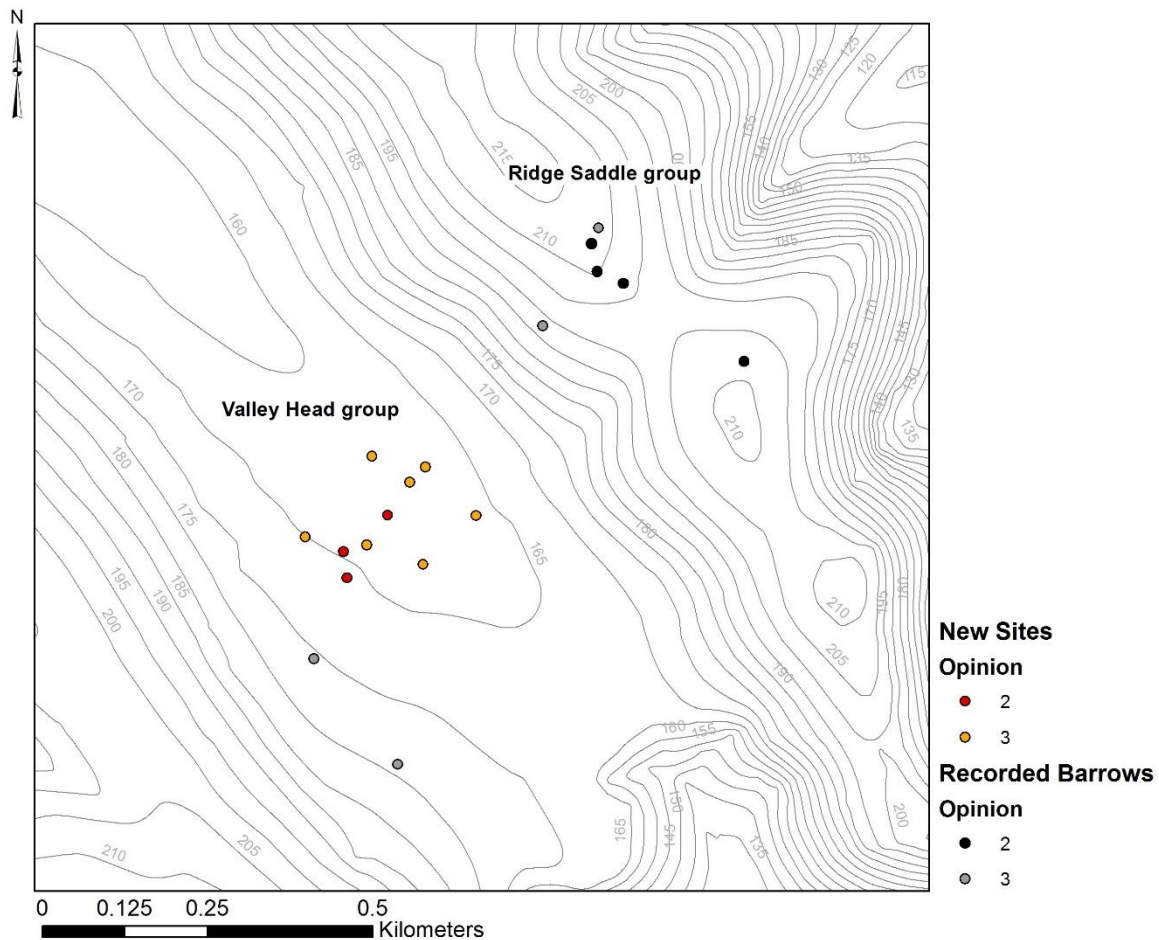


Figure 9 Old and new barrows in the Manor House constellation in relation to the topography; in wet seasons a spring emerges amongst the valley head group; the steep coombe in the north-east corner is part of the Hangers and the location of another intermittent spring feeding into the Rother headwaters. Drawing: Sabine Stevenson

In contrast, the Manor House cemetery is situated around a wet-season spring at the head of a ‘dry’ valley perched high on the Hampshire chalk above the Hangers. Even so, there is an opposition in terms of siting between this new group and a small number of long-known barrows on the saddle of a ridge to the east (Fig 9). It is from this ridge that the most splendid views can be had across into the Weald, yet the cemetery below seems to be the more important part of the local constellation to judge from the number present. Again, there are low-ish mounds and extremely low mounds, the latter of which only gain some credence from the overall context. One unploughed exception here might be a mound alongside the churchyard, but it is currently covered in rubble and it remains to be established whether this

is just a layer over a long-standing mound. Similarly tantalising is a slight rise beneath the church itself (Fig 10).



Figure 10 The small church at Manor House sits on a gentle rise which might conceivably be a denuded barrow. Image: Stuart Needham

Close associations between barrows and water-sources can be seen in some of our other discoveries too. The cemetery overlooking Cranmer Pond has already been mentioned. At the

east end of Ambersham Common, a sizable mound lies very close to a spring (Fig 11). This seems to be fairly isolated, although a pair of enclosure barrows has been found 400m to the west. Likewise, a denuded but clear mound at East Harting sits in the head of a shallow valley whence an intermittent spring issues (Fig 12). The fine mound at The Mint, Liss, sits on a low often waterlogged platform just above the stream that was historically known for its peppermint (Fig 13).



Figure 11 Mound barrow on Ambersham Common; a spring issues a short distance to the right of shot. Image: Stuart Needham

Figure 12 Low mound, probably a denuded round barrow, at East Harting close to a seasonal spring; it lies on the Upper Greensand bench on which barrows have rarely survived historical ploughing. Image: Stuart Needham





Figure 13 Flat-topped mound barrow at The Mint, Liss, close to the stream. Image: Stuart Needham

The East Harting site has a further importance being one of four new sites in Harting parish on the Upper Greensand ‘bench’. Upper Greensand yields some of the more fertile soils of our region and has probably seen much cultivation over past centuries and millennia. This has begged the question, could there have been more barrows on this geology that have all been totally levelled? The small Harting group cannot justify sweeping generalisations, but it does show that barrows did exist in this environment and that it is entirely plausible that many more once existed. Another case of novel environment is to be found between Harting and Petersfield near Stanbridge Farm. A string of five very low circular mounds, presumably plough-reduced, is evident to the south of the Criddell Stream (Fig 14). The remarkable thing about these is that they lie within the Gault Clay belt, another geological bed not known for its barrows. These are an important addition to the immediate barrow-scape of our core site on Petersfield Heath.

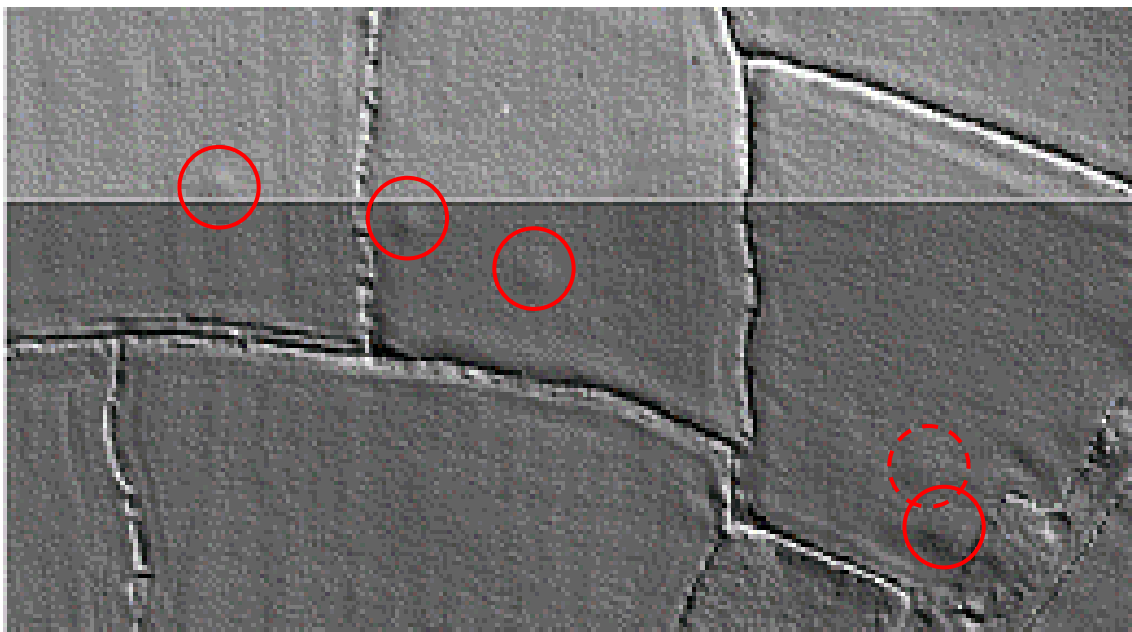


Figure 14 Low mounds on the Gault Clay near Latchett’s Copse, Buriton; a further mound, now totally levelled, is seen on an early aerial photograph just off the right-hand edge. Image processed by Stuart Needham from Environment Agency Lidar data, lit from NE

Many ‘new’ barrows or mounds have been identified along the high downland forming the southern edge of our study zone. A lot of them are towards the lower end of our size range, roughly 8 – 12 metres in diameter, and many show surface indications of having a dense flint nodule make-up (Fig 15). They typically lie amongst the ancient field systems that the *Secrets of the High Woods* project’s Lidar data so



Figure 15 Modest mound on North Marden Down; this is one of many on the high chalk of the South Downs that seems to be a cairn of flints. Image: Stuart Needham

admirably brought to light and thus fit in with the concept of ‘clearance cairns’ – accumulations of stone gathered from fields to make the land easier to plough. There are all sorts of issues relating to this purely functional assumption and, whatever interpretation is favoured for the origin of these ‘flint cairns’, we decided that it would be a mistake to predetermine that they were discrete from other, morphologically similar round mounds. Indeed, their inclusion and comparable treatment in recording gives us the opportunity to examine whether there are any distinguishing characteristics. If they are intimately associated with the field systems, they are likely to belong to the Middle Bronze Age at the earliest, rather than to the Early Bronze Age, the date of most ‘conventional’ round barrows. However, many established EBA barrows later became integrated into field systems.

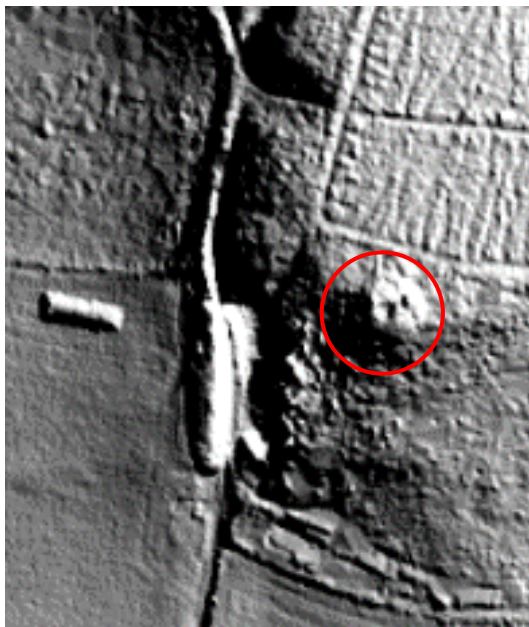


Figure 16 The large barrow perched on the crest of a steep slope in Goldrings Warren; the image also shows clearly the central crater probably deriving from an antiquarian excavation. Image processed by Stuart Needham from Environment Agency Lidar data, lit from NE

Chris Wilkins chose to focus her seminar presentation on the Iping constellation of barrows which was the subject of a People of the Heath field trip in March 2016 (Bulletin no 8). She observed that although it is one of the best barrow groups in the region with many barrows on publicly accessible land these monuments are little known by walkers on the Common. Chris case-studied a few particular sites including the new enclosure barrow and the ‘Roman road barrow’ which are both featured in Bulletin no 8. She also drew attention to the outlying position of the largest barrow of the group which lies on the south-west edge of Goldrings Warren (Fig 16).

Enclosure barrows are in many ways the enigma of the Bronze Age round barrow tradition. Those of you following the project closely will have appreciated that the high number of enclosure barrows on Petersfield Heath is one of that complex’s peculiarities and as a result we are

giving them greater attention than the associated mound barrows. By the same token, enclosure barrows in the wider region have fascinated us, not least because we have doubled the number known. This is really significant at the inter-regional level. Aside from areas of good barrow preservation on the high chalk of, mainly, Wessex, enclosure barrows are hard to come by. It is likely this has much to do with differential destruction, for even where mound barrows can still be discerned in a denuded state (as with many of our sites), the less substantial enclosure barrows would have been much more readily ploughed flat. While their buried ditches would still have the capacity to show up as crop-marks, these would no longer be distinguishable from ditches encircling ploughed out mound barrows.

The fact that we now have about 40 potential enclosure barrows in our modest region is testimony to the wealth of survival habitats for barrows here – the many plots of agriculturally marginal land (often heathland), long-term woodland and long-term pasture. Needless to say, not all of these sites are certain and one of the main areas of uncertainty lies in possible confusion with embanked tree-circles of the garden landscaping tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. Our region has plenty of grand houses with obviously landscaped grounds and one cannot rule out the planting of tree circles even beyond in countryside frequently ridden through for pleasure. However, it is probable that most of the sites identified are prehistoric since they occur either in intimate association with mound barrow



cemeteries (as at Petersfield Heath) or in reasonably close proximity, that is less than 500m away.

Figure 17 Western side of probable enclosure barrow on Pound Common, Woolbeding; Pickwick is 0.6m high when sitting. Image: Stuart Needham



Figure 18 Lidar rendering of enclosure barrow on Chapel Common, Milland; it lies under thick heather and some scrub; the deeply etched lines are trackways and boundaries. Image processed by Stuart Needham from Environment Agency data, lit from NW

Ineke Allez's presentation at the seminar focused on five examples, one being that on Pound Common, Woolbeding (Fig 17). This site was previously known but thought perhaps to be a medieval animal pound, an unlikely explanation given the lack of any entrance. The interior has been levelled into the slope and has a small tump offset to the north. Whereas Pound Common has a recessed interior,

one on Chapel Common, Milland (Fig 18), appears to have a raised interior inside the bank, by around 0.4m. An annular enclosure to the east of our study zone, just inside the Petworth Gate of Cowdray Park, could on the basis of location alone be seen as a landscaping circle. It is however extremely denuded, is clipped on one side by the drive, on another by a field boundary, and has its ditch inside the bank, a feature strongly associated with certain prehistoric monuments. The external diameter is about 47m.



Figure 19 Enclosure barrow on steep slope at Kent's Hill, Bramshott Common. Image: Stuart Needham

One of two such barrows on Bramshott Common is even larger and again has traces of an internal ditch; only half of this one has survived the activities of the

wartime Canadian army camp alongside. Meanwhile, the second is not only smaller (externally 26m), but also has an external ditch; furthermore, it lies on an unusually steep slope of 22° (Fig 19). All these features are replicated closely by one of four enclosure barrows around Black Down, that just under the summit of Castle Copse. It lies on a slope of 29°. Now under light woodland and treacherous leaf litter and wood debris, this site is shown in the open in a watercolour by Grimm executed in 1790 (Fig 20). The subject of Grimm's watercolour is Black Down House and its formal gardens, but while this is clearly a fine example of early landscape gardening, any notion that the enclosure on the hillside behind was a part of that landscaping is undermined by the absence of any trees within it. Even when freshly dug, the earthwork itself would hardly have been conspicuous from Black Down House; Grimm has undoubtedly exaggerated its size massively as seen from his viewpoint.



Figure 20 Samuel Hieronymus Grimm's 1790 watercolour of Black Down House (left) and detail (above) of the enclosure on steep slope above. Image: British Library, Additional ms 5675; item no f.1 (no.1); <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/topdrawings/m/005add000005675u00001000.html>

The next enclosure barrow to the east on Black Down lies on a gentler slope (9°) and was partially excavated by George Anelay in 2014. No good dating evidence was recovered, but pollen analysis from the ditch profile showed clearly the change from predominantly heathland to more wooded conditions that seems to have taken place over the past couple of centuries. This was of course a common transition as common land saw less and less grazing and other exploitation in the modern era. The third barrow in this fairly close-set row is on nearly level ground up near the summit of Black Down (Fig 21). It is known romantically as ‘Temple of the Winds’ and commands extensive views across virtually the whole of the Rother region and into the inner Weald beyond.

Figure 21 ‘Temple of the Winds’ enclosure barrow on the summit of Black Down. Image: Stuart Needham



There is of course considerably more that could be said about the survey results, but most must now wait for full evaluation and the main publication. Suffice it to say that our region has a remarkable set of barrows and potential barrows, a high proportion of which are still visible as upstanding remains. Round barrows of the Early Bronze Age represent Britain’s very first widespread and lasting ‘building project’. They had an enduring impact on local landscapes and this impact can still be seen exceptionally well in the Rother Valley region. The barrows were a tangible expression of local identities and local pride, and modern communities can likewise take a pride in this landscape of special preservation.

We can think of the barrow-scape in terms of a giant fisherman’s net draped across the surface of the land. The knots at each intersection are the barrows, the cords between represent the metaphysical and physical connections between in terms of inter-visibility, route-ways and social ties. The net has become severely damaged over the long passage of intervening time; some knots have loosened, others have totally unravelled; some cords have become thread-bare or have severed; parts of the net have become detached and others have simply vanished. Even so, remarkable and substantial fragments of this skein still survive to be seen today, a circumstance hard to parallel until the appearance of stone-built churches from the eleventh century AD onwards.

Acknowledgements

Our debts of gratitude relating to post-excavation work on the Barrow 19 urn go to Craig Jarvis and Orlando Carvalho (Salisbury Hospital), Jane King and Sheridan Bowman (PotH volunteers) and Garrard Cole (Honorary Research Fellow, University College London).

Historic England are thanked for use of their facilities at Fort Cumberland, where Gill Campbell and other staff made it an especially productive and rewarding experience.

The Regional Barrows Survey continued to be dependent on the goodwill of many landowners and land managers, to all of whom we are extremely grateful. Some took a particular interest in the sites on their land – often new sites. Meanwhile, the dedication and hard work of the survey team cannot be overstated – Sabine Stevenson, Chris Healy, Chris Wilkins, Dom Escott, Ineke Allez and Jane King. Four members of the team (as noted in the text) are also thanked for presenting case-studies to the *Profusion of Barrows* seminar, contributions which undoubtedly made the event all the richer for the full capacity audience in the Rose Room. Equally important to its success were the external experts – Professor Richard Bradley, Dr David Field, Dr Jonathan Last, Dr Alistair Barclay, James Kenny and John Mills – and the services offered by museum staff and Trustees – bookings, registration, catering etc. We wish to thank Wayne Robertson and Katherine West in particular.

Stuart Needham & George Anelay

22 June 2017

‘People of the Heath’ is supported by

