

# LONG BARROWS ON THE SOUTH DORSET RIDGEWAY A SURVEY BY ENGLISH HERITAGE AND THE RIDGEWAY SURVEY GROUP

Hazel Riley and the Ridgeway Survey Group



© Peter Emery



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## **SUMMARY**

A survey of the Neolithic long barrows on the South Dorset Ridgeway was carried out in 2006 and 2007 by the English Heritage Archaeological Survey and Investigation Team (Exeter) and the Ridgeway Survey Group, a team of volunteers local to the Ridgeway. The long barrows include examples of chambered long barrows, well preserved earthen long barrows and sites which can now only be located from air photographs. The sites were recorded using a variety of survey techniques, including analytical earthwork survey and contouring using differential GPS to produce DTMs (Digital Terrain Models). Geophysical surveys were carried out on two of the sites to investigate the survival and preservation of buried features in both extant and ploughed over long barrows. Several of the long barrows are now contained within round barrow cemeteries and may well have formed the original focus for the cemeteries. Two of the long barrows have round barrows constructed on top of their long mounds.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

The fieldwork was carried out by Hazel Riley and the Ridgeway Survey Group: Peter Anthes, Trevor Bailey, Phil Bardswell, Duncan Black, Richard Breward, Hazel Dunning, Peter Emery, Millie Goswell, Roger Holehouse, Tony Jeffers, Helen Jones, Lee Mowbray, Rachael Mowbray, Greg Rochfort, Chris Sadd, Ann Salter, Peter Sheaves, Nick Sturrock, Astrid Walden and William Whiting. Andy Payne carried out geophysical surveys on two of the sites. The illustrations in the report were drawn by Hazel Riley. The reconstruction image and front cover illustration of the Grey Mare and Her Colts were painted by Peter Emery. Archive accounts on which the report is based were written and researched by members of the Ridgeway Survey Group.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Tom Munro and Tony Flux from the Dorset AONB Service helped with setting up the survey group; Ashley Chase Estates, Bridehead Estates, Mr Chipp, Mr Foot, Mr Hoskins, Ilchester Estates, Manor Farm, Poxwell, Mr Pengelly, Mr and Mrs Pinder and Mrs Vincent kindly allowed access to the sites.

## **FRONT COVER**

The Grey Mare and Her Colts © Peter Emery

## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

The report archive is located at the National Monuments Record Centre, Swindon.

## **DATE OF THE SURVEY**

The fieldwork was carried out in 2006 and 2007.

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# LONG BARROWS ON THE SOUTH DORSET RIDGEWAY. A SURVEY BY ENGLISH HERITAGE AND THE RIDGEWAY SURVEY GROUP

## INTRODUCTION

### Location

The South Dorset Ridgeway is an area of high ground in the south of the county (Fig 1), bordered to the south by the English Channel coast, to the north by the valley of the River Frome, to the west by the valley of the River Brit and to the east by Wareham Heath and the Isle of Purbeck.

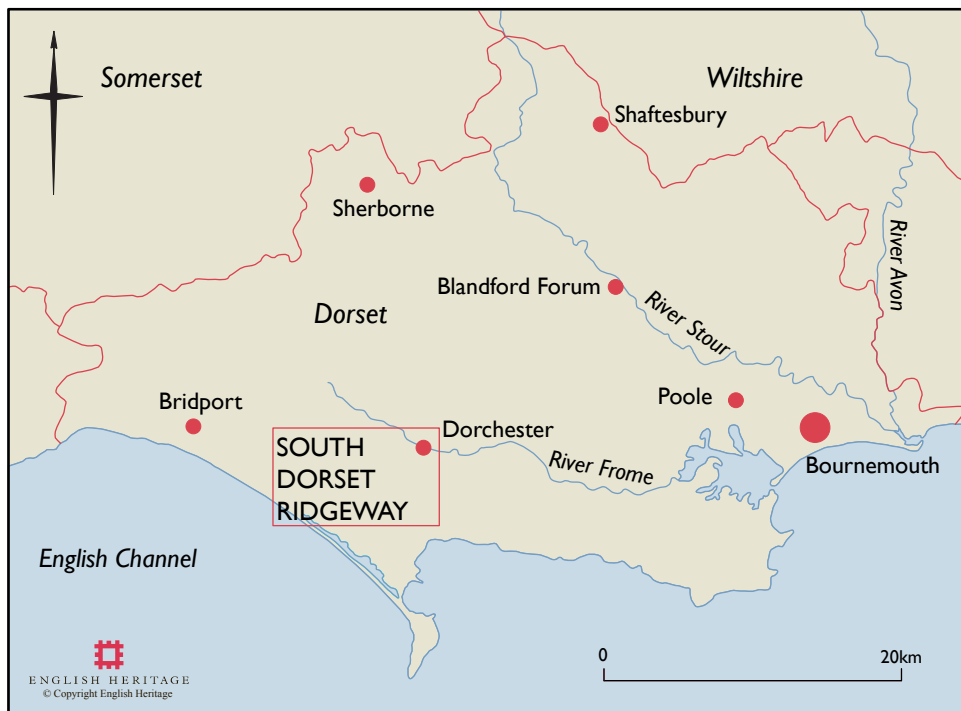


Fig 1  
Location map (© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2008)

### The survey

The Dorset AONB Service, in the run up to a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to support a project celebrating the prehistoric ceremonial landscape of the Ridgeway, realised there was a huge amount of expertise about, and enthusiasm for, the heritage of the area available locally. This survey was designed to harness some of this expertise and enthusiasm in order to record the earliest extant monuments of the Ridgeway – the long barrows.

The Ridgeway Survey Group volunteers assisted with the survey and record of the long barrows and undertook original archive research. The work of the group forms the basis of this report and the written accounts produced by members of the group are held in the NMRC archive and indexed in Appendix 1.

The Ridgeway long barrows range from extant chambered long barrows to sites which now only survive as cropmarks in ploughed fields. The sites were recorded as





Fig 2 Surveying the long barrow on Sheep Down (Hazel Riley)



Fig 3 Surveying the ploughed over long barrow at Longlands (Hazel Riley)



appropriate for their condition: detailed earthwork surveys located to the National Grid at 1: 200, 1: 500 and 1: 1000 scales using EDM and differential GPS, and DTMs using differential GPS to record the slight remains of ploughed over sites (Figs 2 and 3).

Andy Payne from the EH Geophysical Team carried out geophysical surveys of two of the long barrows, with the help of members of the Ridgeway Survey Group. Magnetometry and resistivity survey were undertaken at two contrasting sites: the ploughed over long barrow by the western entrance to Maiden Castle and the extant earthen long barrow on Sheep Down. Full details of the geophysical surveys are described and interpreted in the EH report on the work (Payne 2008) and are summarised below.

### **Geology, topography and land-use**

The Ridgeway takes its topographic form from its underlying geology: chalk. In places the chalk is capped with Eocene sand and clay and much younger, Quaternary deposits of Clay-with-flints (flinty and pebbly clay) and Older Head (pebbly and sandy clay). This occurs mostly towards the centre of the Ridgeway, on Portesham Hill and Bronkham Hill for example (British Geological Survey, sheets 326, 327).

The Ridgeway is a distinct topographic unit. It measures some 25km in length stretching from the valley of the River Brit in the west to Poxwell and the Isle of Purbeck in the east, and is a maximum of 10km in width (Figs 4 and 5). The southern side of the



*Fig 4 Looking east along the Ridgeway (NMR 18882/29) (© English Heritage.NMR)*

Ridgeway rises dramatically from the lower lying land behind Chesil Bank to a height of over 200m on Portesham Hill and Bronkham Hill. To the north the Ridgeway drops down to the valley of the River Frome. The Ridgeway is dissected by many small, steep sided combs, these are usually dry except in the wettest of seasons. The valley of the South Winterbourne River runs roughly from west to east towards the northern

side of the Ridgeway, creating a natural west-east route way now utilised by the A35 trunk road. This valley also contains the main settlements of the area: the villages of the Winterbournes (Abbas, Steepleton, St Martin, Monkton). The larger villages of Portesham and Abbotsbury lie off the Ridgeway on the lower ground behind the coast. A scatter of hamlets and farms lie in and around the combes of the Ridgeway.

The majority of the land is used for agriculture, both arable and livestock. There is a small amount of woodland on the Ridgeway, the main areas are the coniferous plantations on Black Down around Hardy's Monument, and Came Wood, west of the Broadmayne bank barrow.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The scale of the Ridgeway ceremonial landscape impressed the 18<sup>th</sup>-century topographic and antiquarian writers. William Stukeley wrote of the Ridgeway: 'for sight of barrows, I believe not to be equalled in the world' (Stukeley 1776, 163). John Hutchins chronicled the history of Dorset in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and wrote of the barrows around Kingston Russell:

'On the down, near this place, are a great number of tumuli, or barrows, of different sizes, some single, some in groups of three or four: some of the single ones have a shallow trench around them. They are generally campaniform, and neatly turned; some are oblong. Hereabouts seems to have been the scene of some remarkable action, now totally buried in oblivion'  
(Hutchins 1861-70, ii, 192).

Antiquarians working on the Ridgeway in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century were not careful recorders. Leslie Grinsell became somewhat vexed by this during his survey of the barrows of Dorset: 'It is probably true to state that in no county in southern England are the records of excavation of barrows more chaotic, through bad excavation, than Dorset (Grinsell 1959, 20).

Three of the most energetic Victorian barrow diggers in Dorset were John Sydenham, William Shipp and Charles Warne. Warne did publish a large amount of material relating to both his personal research and fieldwork and to that of his friends but, as Grinsell has already shown, it is difficult to relate finds to particular sites (Warne 1865; 1866; 1872). The only long barrow on the Ridgeway which has any recorded excavation is the megalithic chambered long barrow known as the Grey Mare and Her Colts. Warne reports that:

'I have been credibly informed by a former tenant of the land, that he made an exploration some years since, amongst the stones, which resulted in the discovery of many human bones, and a quantity of ancient British pottery in a fragmental state'  
(Warne 1872, 127).

The long barrows with a megalithic component, known as chambered long barrows, have attracted the most attention from antiquarian writers and there are depictions

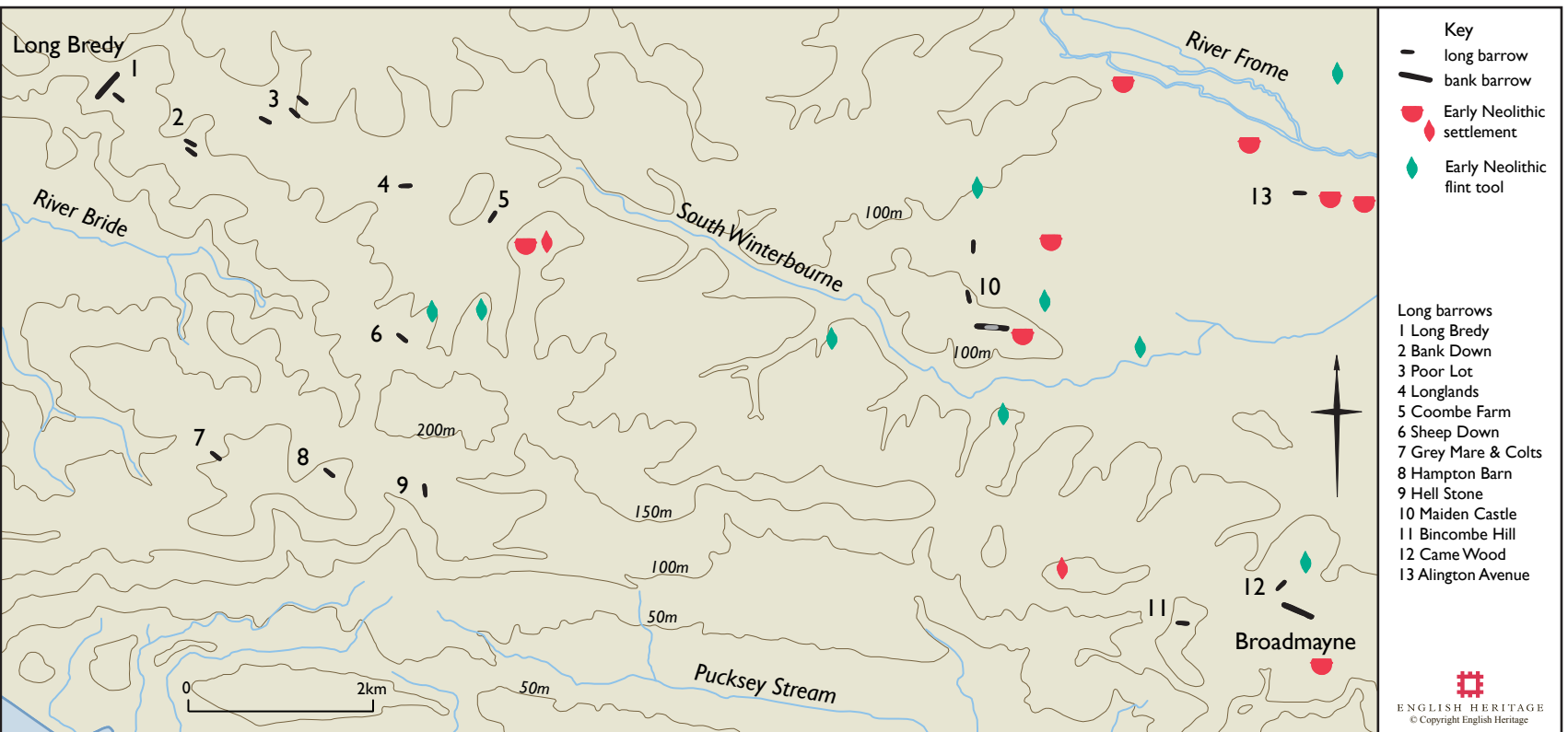


Fig 5 The Ridgeway study area: long barrows and Early Neolithic settlement (© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088,2008)

of the Grey Mare and Her Colts and the Hell Stone from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (below) (Figs 14, 17 and 18). Peter Emery of the Ridgeway Survey Group painted the monument in its current landscape setting (Front Cover).

Dr Colley March of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club led a party on a visit to the Ridgeway in 1908 and published a photograph confirming the existence of a chambered long barrow at Hampton Barn which is no longer extant (Colley March 1908, plate facing page llxiv) (Fig 19).

The fieldwork for Leslie Grinsell's survey of Dorset barrows took place between 1934 and 1959 (Grinsell 1959); the OS Archaeology Division and the EH Inspectors of Ancient Monuments and Field Monument Wardens visited and recorded the sites in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the long barrows were all included in the RCHME Inventories of Dorset (RCHME 1952; 1970). Stuart Piggott visited the Grey Mare and Her Colts and made a record and plan of the site (Piggott 1945) and the chambered long barrows are mentioned in surveys of megalithic sites such as *The Megalithic Chamber Tombs of England and Wales* (Daniel 1950) but are not considered in any detail.

The wide-ranging survey of the South Dorset Ridgeway carried out by Peter Woodward in the 1970s and 1980s included the long barrows (Woodward 1991; archive material in the Dorset County Museum). The excavations and field survey at Maiden Castle in 1985-6 included geophysical and earthwork surveys of the bank barrow, which probably had a long barrow as its precursor (Bradley 1984; Sharples 1991). The RCHME project on bank barrows and cursus enclosures recorded the bank barrows at Long Bredy and Broadmayne, and the long barrow close to the Long Bredy bank barrow (McOmish and Tuck 2000; 2001).

## THE RIDGEWAY LONG BARROWS

### The study area and the long barrow groups

The study area is that considered as the South Dorset Ridgeway Area by the RCHME (1970, map of Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows and sites). It is bounded to the northwest by the Long Bredy bank barrow and to the southeast by the Broadmayne bank barrow (Fig 5). The area contains an extraordinary density and range of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial monuments, including the Poor Lot round barrow cemetery and the causewayed enclosure and bank barrow at Maiden Castle. The Dorchester area, in particular, contains a remarkable range of both buried and extant Neolithic funerary and ceremonial monuments. These include the long barrow at Alington Avenue, the causewayed enclosure at Flagstones House, the henge at Maumbury Rings, the henge enclosure at Mount Pleasant and the large, circular pit alignment which underlies Dorchester (Woodward 1988, 266).

The long barrows considered during this survey fall into four groups: Long Bredy and Poor Lot (7); the chambered long barrows (5); Maiden Castle (3) and Broadmayne and Bincombe Hill (2).

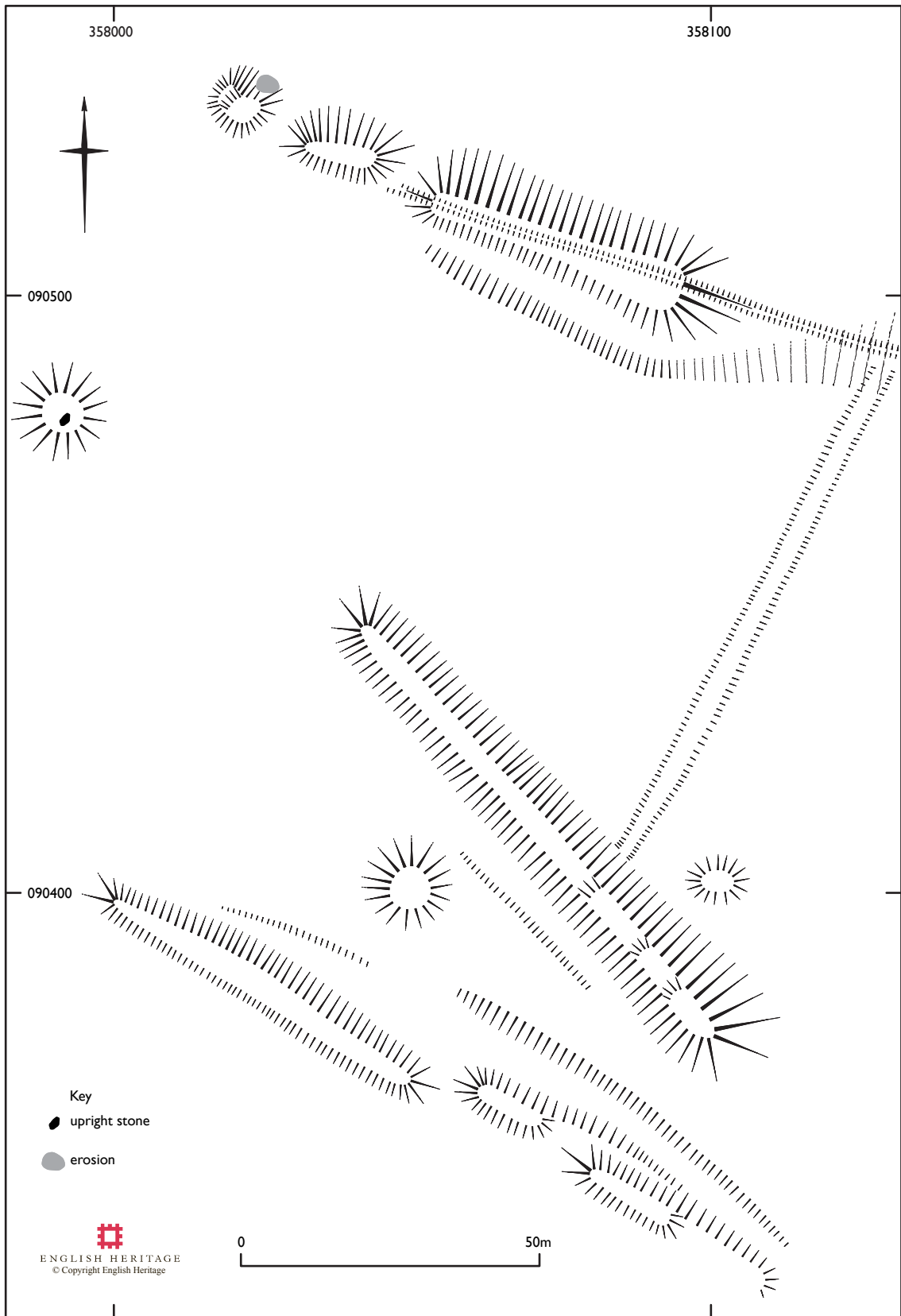


Fig 6 Long barrows on Black Down: earthwork survey

## Long Bredy and Poor Lot

There are six long barrows or possible long barrows in this group. A small long barrow some 200m to the south-east of the Long Bredy bank barrow lies at SY 5832 9099 and was recorded as part of the RCHME's survey of the bank barrow (McOmish and Tuck 2001). Two long barrows lie on Black Down at SY 5806 8950 and SY 5806 8940, some 1.1km to the southeast of the bank barrow (Fig 6). The long barrows can be seen from the bank barrow. The two long barrows on Black Down are similar in form. That to the north comprises a long, flat-topped earthen mound, orientated WNW-ESE, with the remains of a ditch on its south side. The mound is 98m long, 1.5m high and a maximum of 20m wide at its widest, south-eastern end. The mound is interrupted in two places by routes up onto the down and a relatively recent field boundary runs across its top. The ditch is present for some 60m and is 5m wide and 0.4m deep. The mound flares out slightly to at its easternmost end and is also slightly higher at this end.

The long barrow to the south is 105m long, 1.5m high and 15m wide, broadening to 20m wide at its southeast end. The mound is generally flat-topped but rises in a series of steps towards the southeast end. A very slight ditch, 32m long and 5m wide deep, lies on the southwest side of the mound. To the south of the two long barrows, close to a field boundary, are the remains of two rather amorphous mounds with a distinct hollow to the north. These features are most likely to be associated with the use of the Ridgeway as a route way – an estate map of 1750 shows the 'Weymouth Road' in this location (DRO PH 663). However the possibility that they are prehistoric in origin should not be discounted and a geophysical survey of the mounds could help further interpretation of the earthwork evidence. Four round barrows are located close to these long barrows; these form part of the Black Down round barrow group.

The long barrows have been used as part of a pattern of later land division at least twice: a slight field bank runs northeast from the southern long barrow and a field boundary, still in use in the 1980s but now surviving as an earthwork (archive photographs in



*Figure 7 Black Down: photograph from 1977/8 (© P J Woodward, The Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, The Dorset County Museum)*





*Fig 8 Black Down: long barrow in 2006 (Hazel Riley)*

Dorset County Museum), utilised the top of the northern long barrow. Both monuments were being ploughed in the 1980s but are now under pasture (archive photographs in Dorset County Museum) (Figs 7 and 8).

The Poor Lot round barrow cemetery lies one kilometre to the northeast of the long barrows on Black Down, at the head of the South Winterbourne valley. The Poor Lot round barrows include well preserved examples of bell barrows and disc barrows, laid out in the form of a linear barrow cemetery orientated NW-SE running along the edge of the valley for some 600m, with a second linear group running NE-SW up the northern side of the valley for some 300m. Three possible long barrows are contained within the Poor Lot barrows. A good candidate lies at the top of the second linear group at SY 5930 9097 (Fig 9). This is a rectangular, flat-topped mound, orientated NW-SE, 30m long, 15m wide and 1m high. The mound has been deliberately sited between two swallow holes. Some 150m to the southwest at SY 5920 9085 is the well known Poor Lot triple barrow, comprising a long mound, orientated NW-SE with three circular mounds on its top and a slight ditch on its northeast side (Fig 10). The mound is 45m long, 20m wide and 3m high. The three circular mounds are arranged in increasing size from northwest to southeast, being 8m, 10m and 15m in diameter, and adding some 1m to the height of the monument. Interpretation of the monument is made difficult by its later incorporation into a field system, and recent ploughing has obscured details of the ditch (Fig 11). However, the monument could well have originated as a long barrow, with three round barrows built on top of it in the Early Bronze Age. The third possible long barrow lies at the heart of the Poor Lot group at SY 5897 9074. It has also been interpreted as a triple barrow and comprises a rectangular mound, 23m long, 16m wide and 2m high with an irregular top and a ditch on its southwest side.

Six hundred metres to the southwest of the Poor Lot group is the long barrow at Longlands Farm (SY 6044 9004). Although the site has been ploughed over for many years, the mound still survives in the form of a low, sub-rectangular mound, orientated



*Fig 9 Poor Lot:  
long barrow  
(Hazel Riley)*



*Fig 10 Poor Lot:  
triple barrow  
(Hazel Riley)*

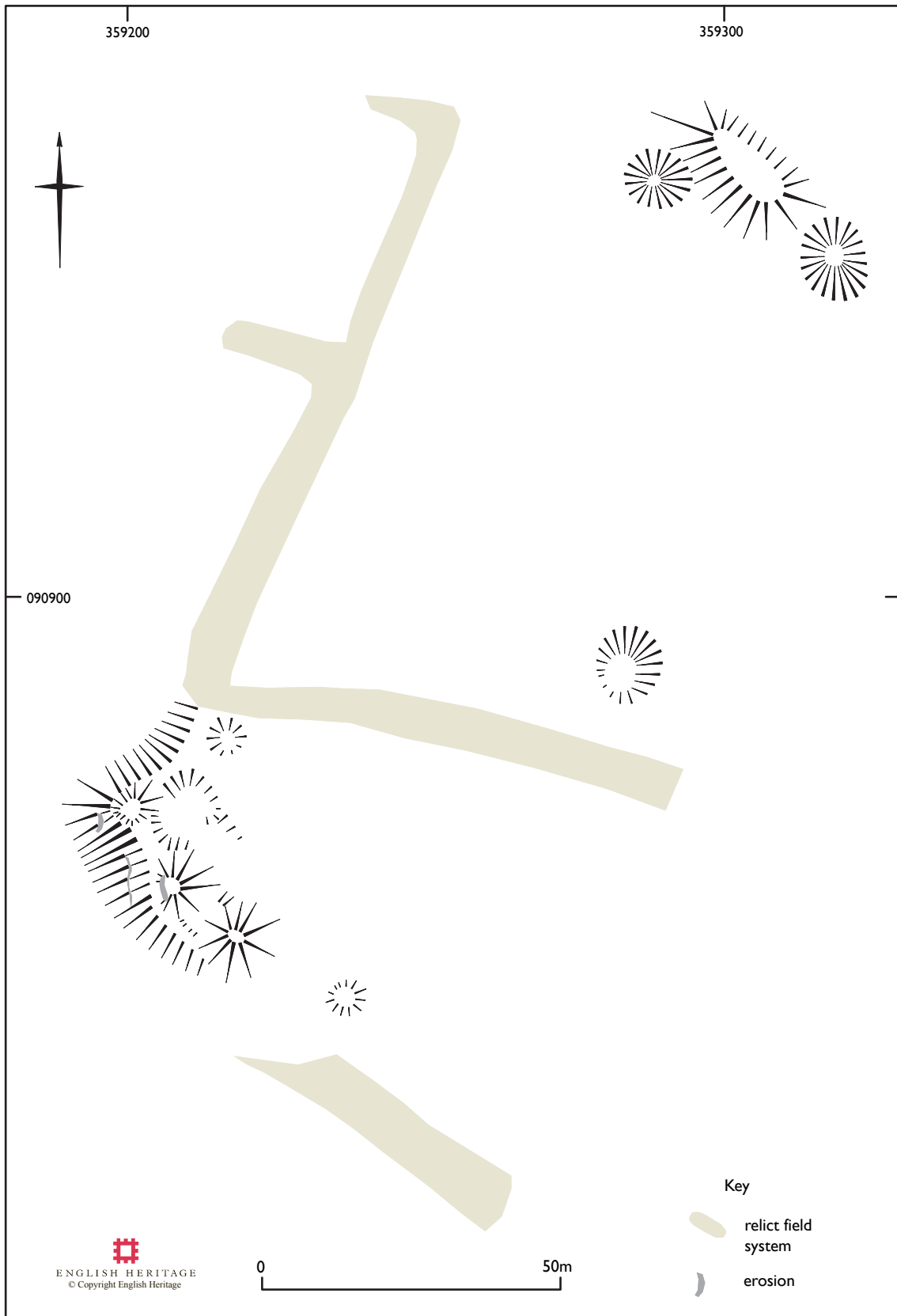


Fig 11 Poor lot long barrows:  
earthwork survey

W-E and 24m long, 17m wide and 0.6m high (Fig 3). The long barrow lies in a group of six round barrows, the Longlands barrow cemetery (SY 68 NW 25). Long Lands was enclosed in 1810 (Winterbourne Abbas Enclosure Award and Map, DRO Inclosure 69) and air photographs show that it has been under arable cultivation from the 1940s to the present day (CPE UK 1934 17 JAN 1947 fr 5097; OS 8400347/304 21 APR 1984).

### **Megaliths and long barrows**

Five long barrows on the Ridgeway have a megalithic component. They range from the extant chambered long barrows known as the Grey Mare and Her Colts and the Hell Stone, to the ploughed over site at Hampton Barn, with its megalithic component now only known from documentary sources. The chambered long barrows form a compact group on the Ridgeway, with its centre at the Valley of Stones, probably the source of the sarsens used in the construction of the monuments' megalithic components.

The Grey Mare and Her Colts (SY 5838 8706) lies at the head of a dry valley which runs down to Gorwell in the valley of the headwaters of the River Bride (Front Cover). The monument is a remarkably well preserved example of a chambered long barrow. It comprises a rectangular mound, orientated NW-SE and 24m long. The mound tapers in width from the southeast end (13m) to the northwest end (8m) (Fig 12). The mound is highest at the southeast (1m) and drops to 0.4m high at the northwest. The southeast end terminates in a row of four massive sarsens, three are upright, one, at the northeast end, is recumbent (Fig 13). A fifth sarsen, now recumbent at the southwest end of the row, is likely to be that depicted on an 18<sup>th</sup>-century engraving as upright at the southwest corner of the mound (Fig 14). Behind the sarsen stones, recumbent on the edge of the mound, is a fifth massive sarsen, probably the capstone of the collapsed chamber. The slight scarp to the southeast of the end of the mound is probably the result of ploughing, a process which has presumably obliterated the quarry ditches for the mound. Several stones set into the edge of the mound are probably the remains of a retaining kerb. The ledge at the northwest end of the mound was caused by a hedge, now removed, but depicted on an 18<sup>th</sup>-century engraving (Fig 14), and two hollows on the top of the mound may represent the remains of antiquarian excavations (Historical Background, above).

The Hell Stone (SY 6058 8670) lies in a similar location to the Grey Mare and Her Colts, at the head of a dry valley system which runs south and southwest via Hell Bottom to the southern edge of the Ridgeway at Corton Hill (Fig 15). The Hell Stone comprises a rectangular mound, orientated NW-SE and 24m long. The mound tapers in width from the southeast end (12m) to the northwest end (8m) and is 1m high (Fig 16). An arrangement of upright sarsens with a massive capstone sits on the southeast end of the mound. This was an attempt at restoration in 1866 when eight gentlemen fabricated something more akin to a portal dolmen than to the façade of a chambered long barrow (Warne, 1872, ii) (compare Figs 17 and 18). A drystone field wall runs across the mound and a pond for watering stock was dug close to the southeast end of the mound very recently.

Roughly halfway between the Hell Stone and the Grey Mare and Her Colts, west of Hampton Barn and close to the summit of Portesham Hill (SY 5961 8688), is the site



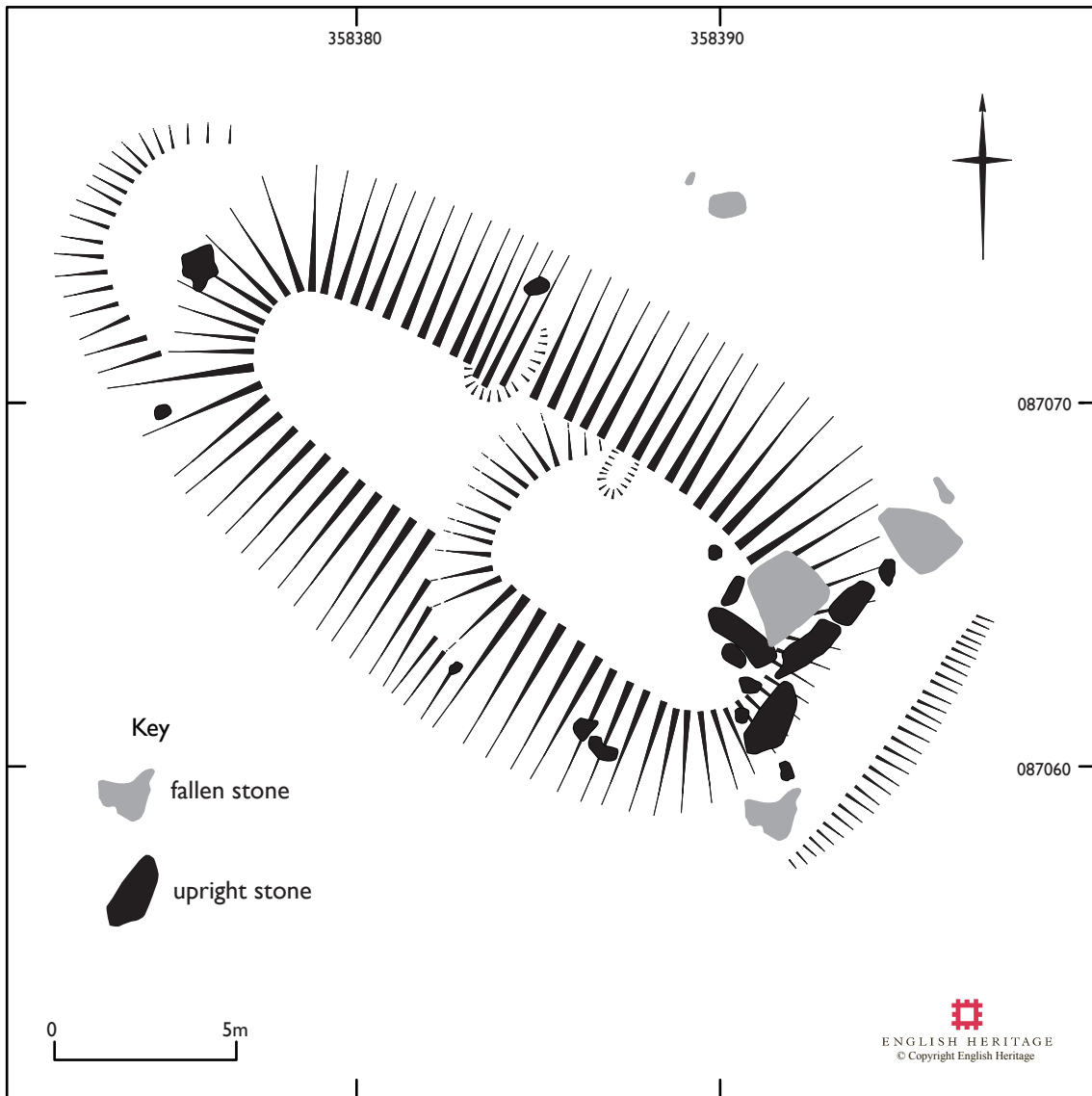


Fig 12 (above) The Grey Mare and Her Colts: earthwork survey

Fig 13 (left) The Grey Mare and Her Colts: stone façade (Hazel Riley)



Fig 14 The Grey Mare and Her Colts: 18th-century engraving (Hutchins 1861-70, 752)



Fig 15 The Hell Stone (Hazel Riley)



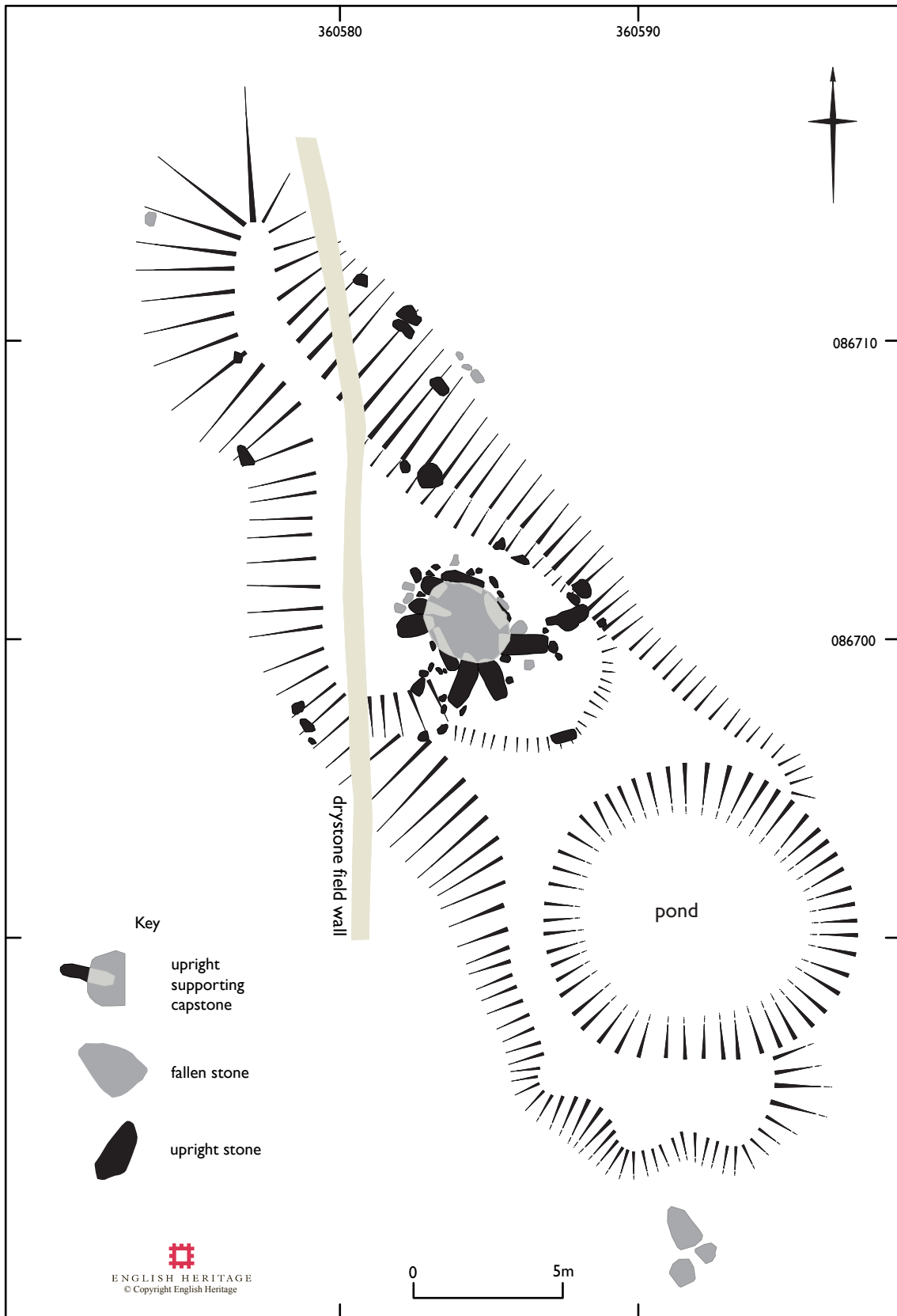


Fig 16 The Hell Stone: earthwork survey



Fig 17 The Hell Stone: 18th-century engraving



Fig 18 The Hell Stone: 19th-century engraving (Pitt Rivers papers, Salisbury Museum)



*Fig 19  
Hampton Barn:  
photograph  
1908 (Colley  
March 1908,  
facing p ixxiv)*

of a third chambered long barrow. The remains comprise a very slight, ovoid mound, orientated N-S, 23m long, 20m wide and 0.30m high. In 1908 the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club, led by Dr Colley March, visited the Ridgeway. He notes a 'collapsed dolmen' near Hampton Barn and a photograph shows at least five sarsens (Colley March 1908, ixxiv; photograph facing p ixxiv) (Fig 19). Crawford recorded a long barrow orientated NW-SE with two stones at the southeast end (OS Map of Neolithic Wessex, no. 144). Leslie Grinsell recorded 'two large stones, perhaps at E. end of otherwise destroyed long barrow' (Grinsell 1959, 81) and the RCHME recorded two recumbent and partially buried sarsens and interpreted the mound as a probable round barrow (RCHME 1970, 513). The stones remained until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century when they were moved and possibly buried by the edge of the field (Information from EH Historic Environment Field Adviser).

A similar site lies some 3.3km to the northeast, on the edge of a dry valley which runs into the valley of the South Winterbourne, northeast of Coombe Farm (SY 6140 8967). The remains comprise a slight, much ploughed, ovoid mound, orientated NE-SW, 17m long and 13m wide. Two large, recumbent sarsens lie on the south edge of the mound (Fig 20). The field has evidently been ploughed for many years: it once formed part of the open fields of Winterbourne Steepleton and it was arable land in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century



*Fig 20 Coombe  
Farm: megaliths  
(Hazel Riley)*



(Winterbourne Steepleton tithe map and award, 1841). Warne records 'one large stone, apparently the cap-stone, which, with two or three others, probably its supports, now lie in a confused heap, overgrown with briars and nettles' (Warne 1872, 136).

At the head of the same dry valley, some 1.6km to the southwest of Coombe Farm on Sheep Down (SY 5961 8688), is what at first sight appears to be an earthen long barrow (Fig 2). The monument comprises a substantial rectangular mound, orientated NW-SE and 55m long. The mound tapers in width from the southeast end (34m) to the northwest end (26m) (Fig 21). The mound is highest at the southeast (3m) and drops to 2m high at the northwest, with a step down roughly half way along the mound. The field has evidently been ploughed in the recent past, although it was not enclosed until 1863 (Winterbourne Steepleton Enclosure Award and Map, DRO Inclosure 81).

The geophysical surveys carried out by the EH Geophysics Team and the Ridgeway Survey Group on Sheep Down showed some rather surprising results (Payne 2008) (Fig 22). Both the magnetometry and the resistivity surveys failed to locate the presence of buried flanking ditches. The resistivity survey showed a high resistance, curvilinear response around the base of the barrow mound, indicating the presence of a retaining wall. There was also an area of increased resistance across the mound, with an area of high resistance towards the southeast end, perhaps indicating the presence of a collapsed stone chamber. The geophysical survey suggests that the long barrow on Sheep Down was originally a chambered long barrow, like the Grey Mare and Her Colts. The absence

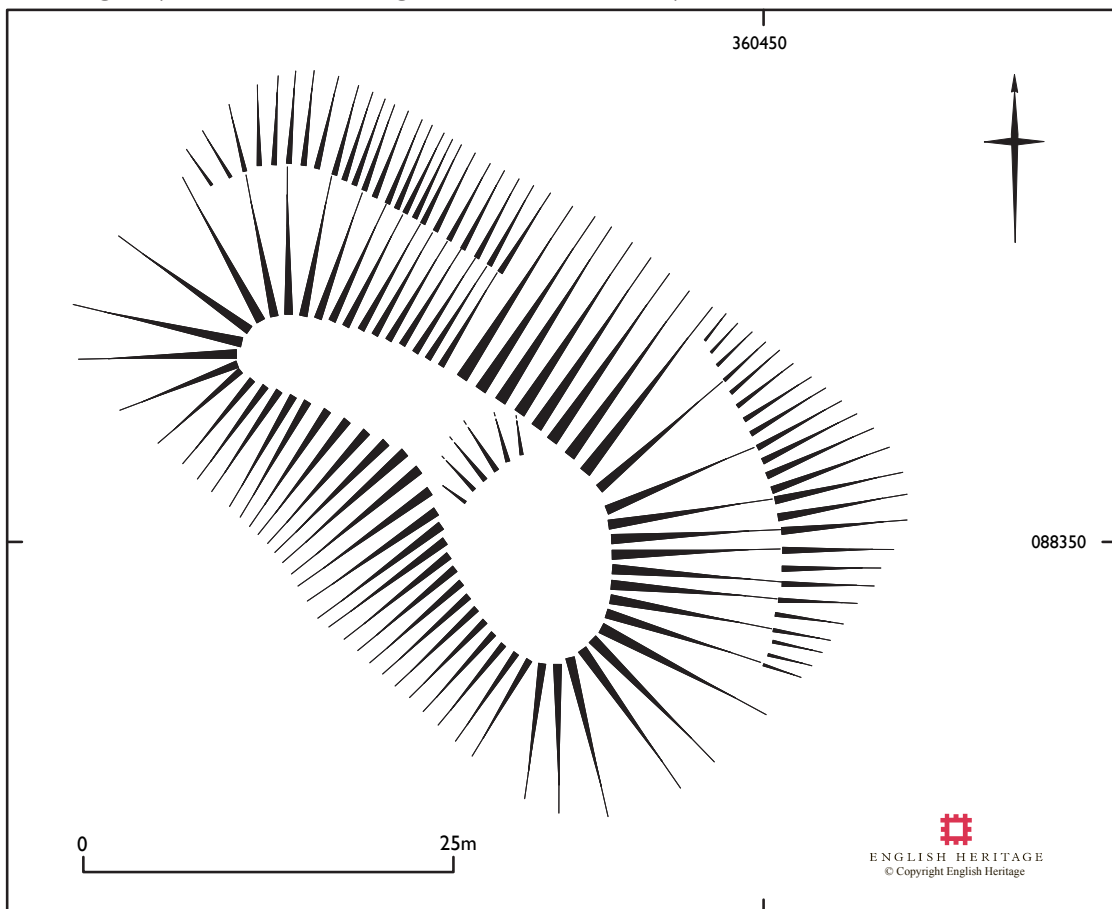
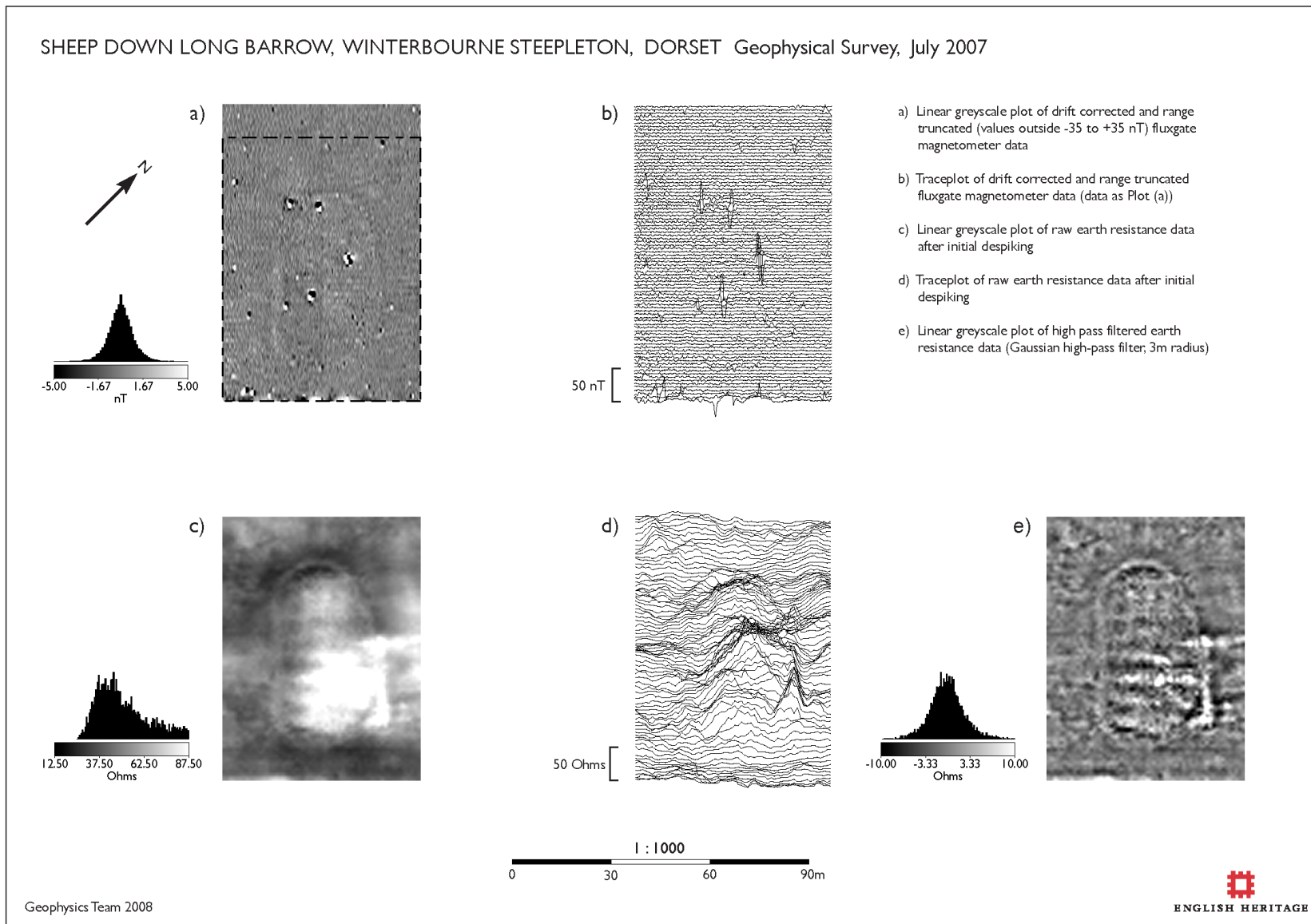


Fig 21 Sheep Down: earthwork survey

Fig 22 Sheep Down: geophysics plot



of flanking ditches is problematic. It may be the result of the local geology: the barrow lies on an area of pebbly and sandy clay (Older Head, British Geological Survey, sheet 326). The mound material may have been obtained locally from the sand and clay deposits just to the north, where there are extensive quarries.

## Maiden Castle

Two long barrows lie close to Maiden Castle. One, 600m to the north of the western entrance to the north of Maiden Castle (SY 6657 8938) and on a ridge between two dry valleys, is now only visible on air photographs (Fig 23). It shows as two parallel ditches, orientated N-S and some 80m long and 20m apart. The monument is open at the southern end and appears to be closed at the northern end. A ring ditch (a ploughed out



*Fig 23 Ploughed over long barrows NW of Maiden Castle (NMR 65 fr 83) (© Crown Copyright.NMR)*

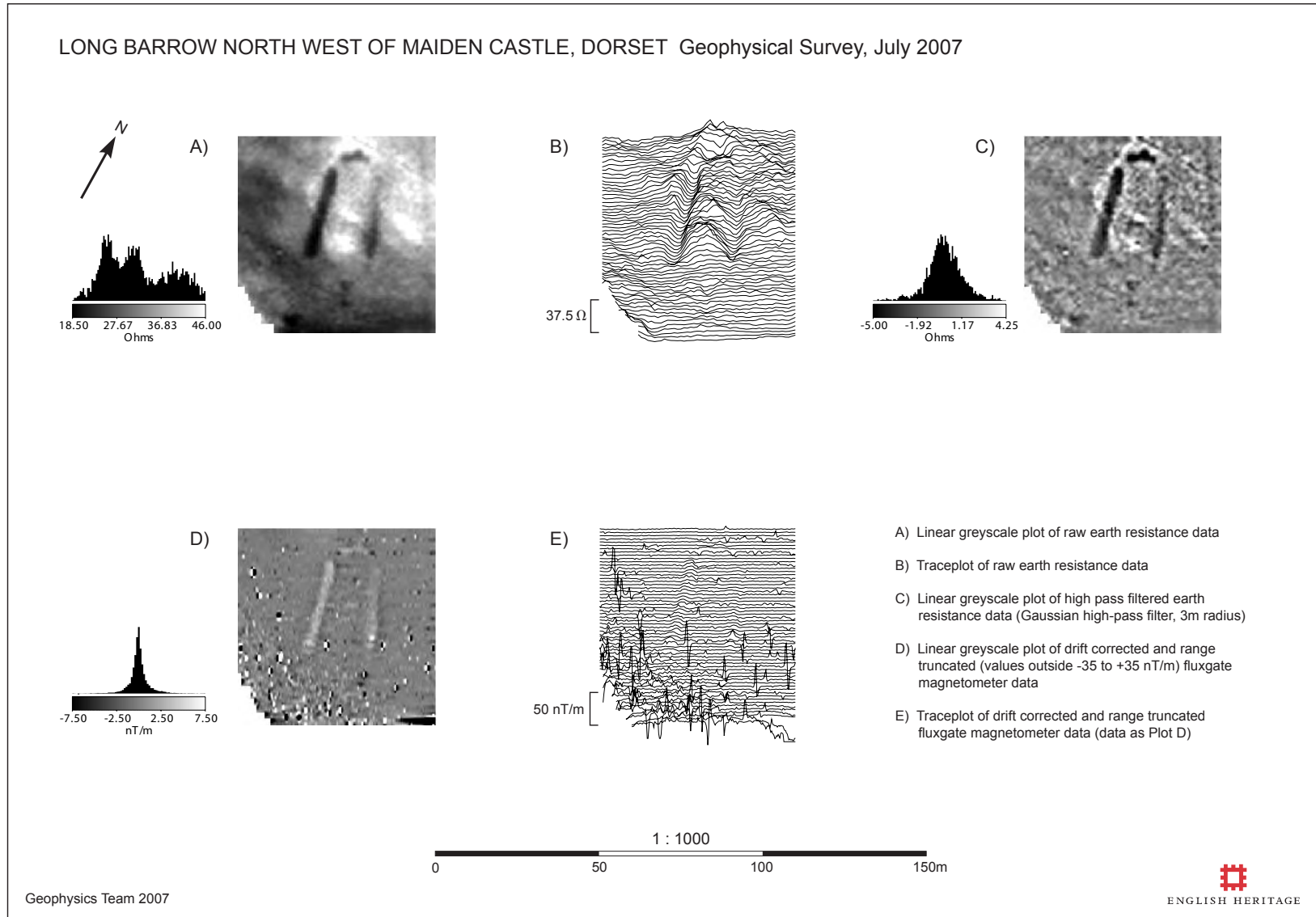
round barrow) lies at the southern end. The monument survived as an earthwork in the 1950s and 1960s. The RCHME described it as a mound, 320 feet (c 106m) long, 45 feet (c 13m) long and a maximum of 1¼ feet (c 0.4m) high, with flanking side ditches showing as soil marks, and suggested that it had been deliberately levelled (RCHME 1970, 432). No remains are visible on the ground today.

The second long barrow lies 50m to the north of the western entrance of Maiden Castle (SY 6651 8879) at the head of a dry valley. It comprises a low, ploughed over mound, orientated N-S, 24m long, 20m wide and 0.3m high. Aerial photographs taken in 1937 when Mortimer Wheeler was excavating Maiden Castle show the monument as a substantial mound with flanking ditches (Ashmolean Museum collection: ACA 7312 fr 776; ACA 7090 fr 766; ACA 7090 fr 767).

The geophysical surveys of this long barrow clearly show the buried ditches. Both



Fig 24 Maiden Castle: geophysics plot





*Fig 25 Maiden Castle: magnetometer survey (Hazel Riley)*

magnetometry and resistivity surveys showed the ditch on the western and eastern sides of the barrow (Figs 24 and 25). The ditch was also present across the north end of the mound but did not appear to be continuous, suggesting a similar arrangement to the ploughed out long barrow to the north (above). Areas of high resistance at the south end of the mound may be interpreted as a collapsed and buried chamber (Payne 2008).

The Maiden Castle bank barrow may have been preceded by a long barrow. Richard Bradley suggested that the change in orientation of the bank barrow, combined with unpublished evidence from Wheeler's excavations, indicated that the bank barrow was created by extending a long barrow to the west and east. The surviving earthwork evidence supports this proposition, with a mound 65m long and 15m wide just to the west of the causewayed enclosure representing the remains of the long barrow (Bradley 1984, 16; Sharples 1991, 54, fig 29).

### **Broadmayne and Bincombe Hill**

Two long barrows lie at the eastern end of the Ridgeway, close to the Broadmayne bank barrow and rather isolated from the rest of the Ridgeway long barrows. One is just to the north of the summit of Bincombe Hill at SY 6885 8516. It comprises a rectangular mound, orientated W-E, 75m long, 10m wide and 1.3m high (Fig 26). The west and east ends of the mound are rather disturbed and ploughing has obscured any earthwork remains of flanking ditches. It has been suggested that this mound is of quite recent construction and associated with the military use of the area. It is depicted on the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of 1862-89, giving it some antiquity (Fig 27). There was a large military camp on Bincombe Downs in 1801, formed at the threat of a Napoleonic invasion (Hutchins 1861-70, 278). The earthworks, however, do not look 'fresh' enough to have been constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the monument is most probably a long barrow. It lies towards the centre of the Bincombe Hill round barrow group and traces of Early Neolithic settlement have been found to the west on Ridgeway Hill and to the east on

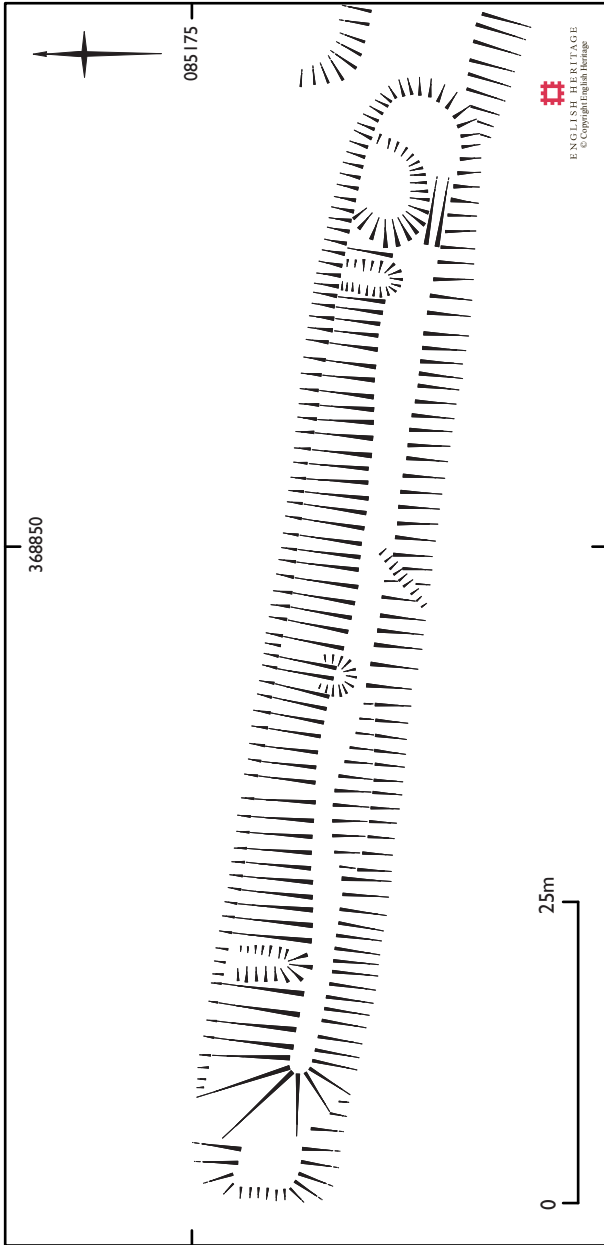


Fig 26 Bincombe Hill: earthwork survey

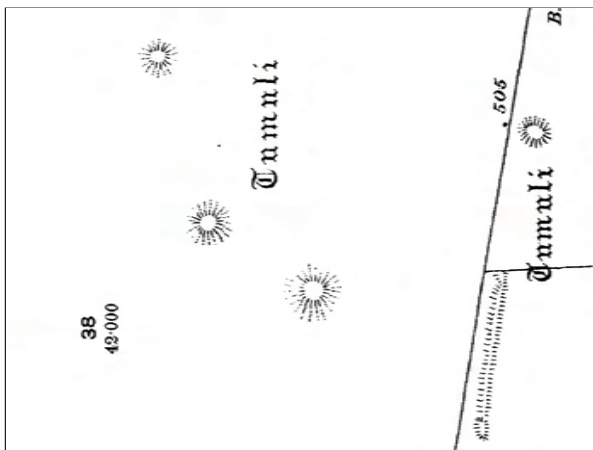


Fig 27 Bincombe Hill: extract from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2008). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024

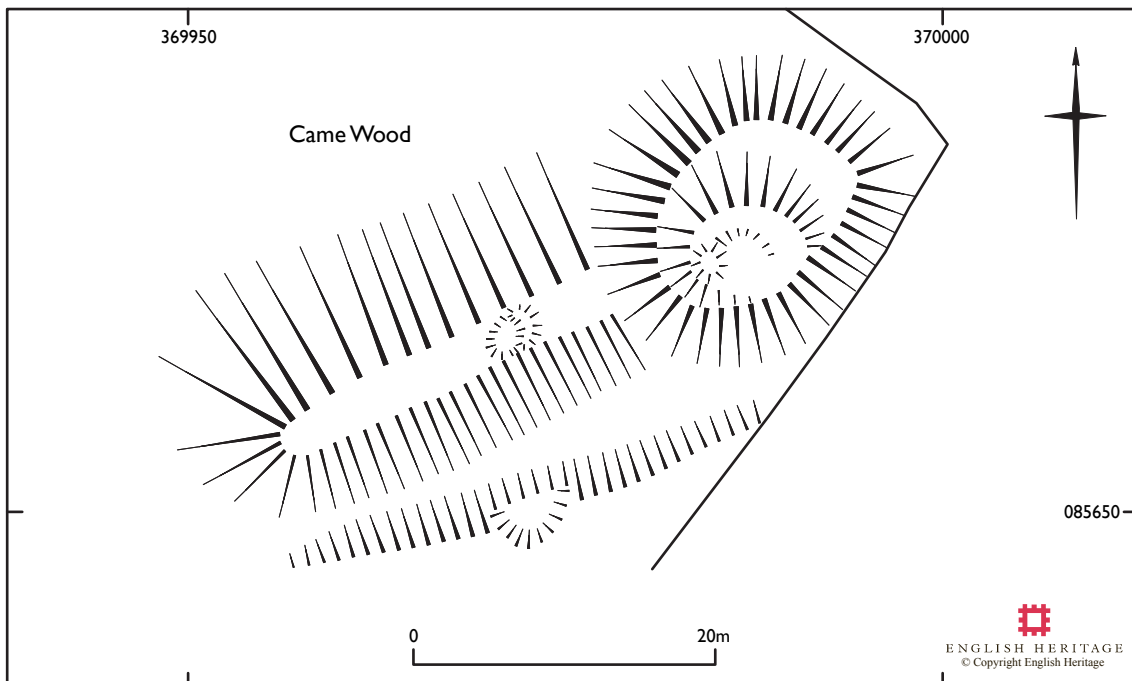
West Hill (below).

Six hundred metres to the northeast, on the edge of Came Wood and between the two dry valleys which run north down into Whitcombe, is a well preserved long barrow



*Fig 28 (left)  
Came Wood:  
the long barrow  
mound and  
round barrow*

*Fig 29 (below)  
Came Wood:  
earthwork  
survey*





(SY 6997 8567) (Fig 28). It comprises a sub-rectangular mound with a round mound on top of its northeast end (Fig 29). The mound is orientated NE-SW and is 52m long. The rectangular mound is 12m wide and 1m high. The round mound is 20m in diameter and 1.5m high. A ditch, 34m long, 1-4m wide and 0.6m deep lies on the southern side of the mound. The monument is a long barrow with a large round barrow incorporated into its northeast end. Small hollows on the tops of both the long barrow and the round barrow indicate the sites of unrecorded antiquarian excavations. The long barrow lies 400m to the northwest of the Broadmayne bank barrow and on the northern edge of the Culliford Tree round barrow group (Fig 31).

## DISCUSSION

### The Ridgeway long barrows in context

Research has been undertaken recently on a new dating programme which aims to bring the Early Neolithic of southern England into a much sharper focus. This research is funded by EH, the AHRC, (Arts and Humanities Research Council), and the Leverhulme Trust. About 1500 radiocarbon dates from Early Neolithic sites in southern England have been examined including 169 from five long barrows (Bayliss and Whittle 2007; Bayliss *et al* 2007). Using Bayesian statistics, the date range represented by a radiocarbon date can be compressed if other information about context, sequence, sample character and other radiocarbon dates from the site is taken into account. The first results of this programme come from dates on five long barrows in southern England (Hazleton North, Ascott-under-Wychwood, Waylands Smithy, West Kennett and Fussell's Lodge). The work shows that the burials in long barrows took place over a few generations at the most – they were the burials of known people, thus challenging old ideas about Neolithic ancestor worship and the ritual manipulation of ancient bones.

These results, together with those from recent work on other Early Neolithic monuments in Britain and Ireland, suggests the following chronology. People started building long barrows in 3800 BC, around 200 years after the start of the Neolithic, and few barrows were used for more than 3 or 4 generations. Causewayed enclosures date from 3700 – 3600 BC and major earthwork cursus monuments and probably bank barrows date from 3650 – 3350 BC (Bradley 2007). If the Bayesian statistics model is the right one, it seems that the long barrows are the first monuments to be built on the South Dorset Ridgeway.

The evidence for Early Neolithic settlement on the Ridgeway suggests that the people who built and used the long barrows lived close to them. There are three areas with Early Neolithic settlement evidence on the Ridgeway: at Rowden (above Loscombe Farm); at Maiden Castle and at Bincombe. The Frome Valley, in the area now occupied by Dorchester, was also an important focus for settlement throughout the Neolithic period (Fig 5).

The remains of pits containing Early Neolithic pottery, together with carbonised grain (emmer wheat and barley), charcoal (mostly oak and hazel), animal bones (pig, sheep/goat, cattle, roe deer) and worked flint were found during excavations at Rowden

(Woodward 1991, 47; 74; 98; 105). The site is close to two of the Ridgeway long barrows: 600m southeast of the megaliths at Combe Farm and 1.5km northeast of the long barrow on Sheep Down.

Two Early Neolithic settlement sites have been excavated in the vicinity of the long barrow on Bincombe Hill. On West Hill, 1.5km east of the long barrow and close to the round barrows known locally as the 'Bincombe Bumps', a pit containing Early Neolithic pottery and worked flints was found, and on Ridgeway Hill, 1.3 km west of the long barrow, a pit containing Early Neolithic flint tools was recorded (RCHME 1970, 511).

Early/Middle Neolithic pottery has been identified from the excavations at Maiden Castle, both from the causewayed enclosure and from the bank barrow ditch fills, and pottery from quarry pits at Maiden Castle Road has recently been identified as Early Neolithic (Sharples 1991, 35; Woodward 1991, 133). In the Dorchester area, excavations carried out in advance of redevelopment of the town centre and on the course of the by-pass have resulted in the identification of the area as an important focus of occupation and activity throughout the Neolithic period. An Early Neolithic settlement component was recognised in material from the excavation of the henge monument at Mount Pleasant; the excavation of the causewayed enclosure at Flagstones House to the west of Mount Pleasant recovered Early Neolithic settlement evidence in the form of two pits on the northern side of the enclosure containing charcoal and burnt seeds associated with Early Neolithic pottery (Woodward 1988, 269). Early Neolithic pottery was found in the excavations in the centre of Dorchester at Greyhound Yard and a single sherd of Early Neolithic pottery was found in a pit at Poundbury (Woodward 1991, 133). A long barrow, sealed by a round barrow like that at Came Wood, was excavated in Dorchester at Alington Avenue (Woodward 1991, 133).

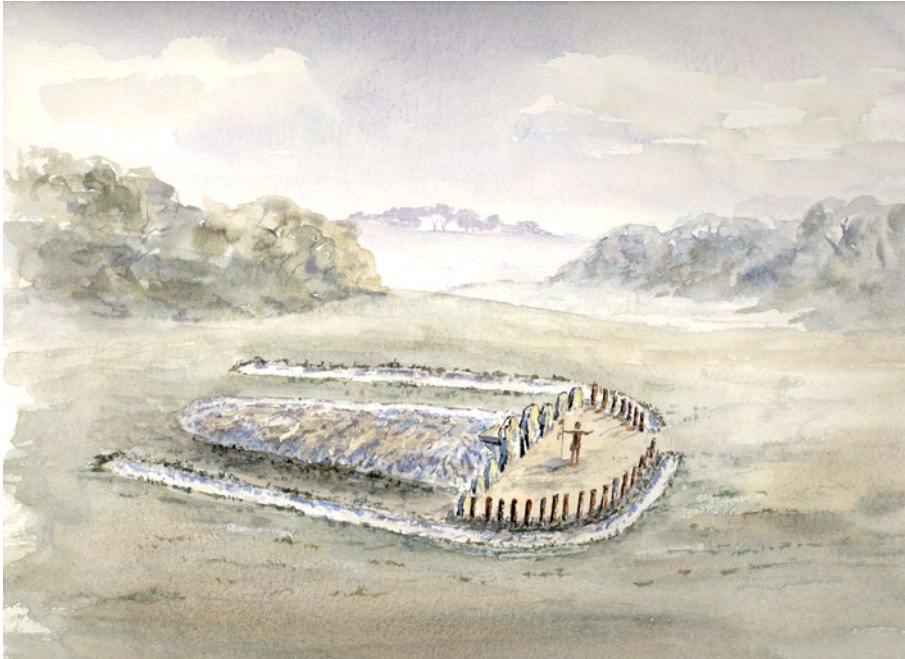
Neolithic components have been identified in flint assemblages from fieldwalking, collected as part of the South Dorset Ridgeway survey, at Sheep Down, Cowleaze and Whitcombe, and several 'casual' finds of Early Neolithic flint arrow heads and flint axes have been found across the Ridgeway area. Analysis of the flint assemblages by the South Dorset Ridgeway survey suggested a greater use of flint axes on the uplands of the Ridgeway, contrasting with larger numbers of arrowheads found in the lowlands around Maiden Castle and Dorchester (Woodward 1991, 20-38).

The pits with pottery and other domestic material which represent the habitation sites of the long barrow builders of southern England contrast both with their funerary and ceremonial monuments and with the stone and wooden of the stone or wooden rectangular houses and halls found in Early Neolithic Ireland and Scotland. Rather than building elaborate houses of stone or wood, those living in southern England seem to have focussed their attention on the long barrows themselves, which may have been regarded as metaphors for houses (Bradley 2007, 59-62).

### **Long barrows in the landscape**

The long barrows were probably constructed in open areas of cleared woodland (Woodward 1991, 129). Each monument may have only been in use for the burial of a





*Fig 30 The Grey Mare and Her Colts: reconstruction of the site at the end of its use in the Neolithic period (© Peter Emery)*



*Fig 31 Broadmayne barrow cemetery (NMR 18882/12) (© English Heritage.NMR)*

generation or two of these farming families who lived up on the Ridgeway, not far from their funerary monuments, before it was deliberately put out of use. The burial chambers of the chambered long barrows were blocked by a massive façade of sarsens (Fig 30). At Maiden Castle the long barrow on the hill top was extended to the west and east at some time after the causewayed enclosure was built to form a massive linear monument.

The long barrows continued to be significant features in the landscape for over a thousand years and by the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC several became the focus for major Bronze Age round barrow cemeteries. This happened at Black Down, Poor Lot, Longlands, Maiden Castle, Bincombe Hill and Came Wood (Fig 31). At Poor Lot and Came Wood long barrows were deliberately 'decommissioned' by the construction of round barrows on top of the long mounds. By the Iron Age the old round barrow cemeteries and long barrows were becoming engulfed in a landscape of agriculture and, at times, conflict.

Most of the long barrows escaped the expansion of medieval arable agriculture, sited as they are on what was, in the medieval period, unenclosed down land. The chambered long barrow at Coombe Farm, however, was enclosed sometime in the early historic period and became part of the open fields of Winterbourne Steepleton. Much of the down land was enclosed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The long barrows in general escaped the attentions of antiquarians who reserved their energies for seeking rich grave goods in the round barrows of the Ridgeway. The chambered long barrows caught the imagination of locals and visitors to the Ridgeway and legends grew up around the Grey and Her Colts and the Hell Stone. The post-war intensification of agriculture took its toll on the Ridgeway long barrows, with air photographs from the 1940s onwards documenting the degradation of several of the long mounds. The long barrows which survive as substantial earthworks are now, however, in pasture fields.

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## APPENDIX I

BLACK DOWN SY 59 SE 32, SY 59 SE 33 Surveyed and researched by Millie Gosling, Helen Jones and Chris Sadd.

POOR LOT SY 59 SE 116, SY 59 SE 117 Surveyed and researched by Lee and Rachael Mowbray.

LONGLANDS SY 68 NW 25 Surveyed and researched by Richard Breward and Hazel Dunning.

COMBE FARM SY 68 NW 16 Surveyed and researched by Trevor Bailey.

SHEEP DOWN SY 68 NW 6 Surveyed and researched by Peter Anthes, Tony Jeffers and Nick Sturrock. Archive account by Peter Anthes and Tony Jeffers.

HAMPTON BARN SY 58 NE 21 Surveyed and researched by Ann Salter. Archive account by Ann Salter.

THE GREY MARE AND HER COLTS SY 58 NE 19 Surveyed and researched by William Whiting and Peter Emery. Archive account by William Whiting.

THE HELL STONE SY 68 NW 12 Surveyed and researched by Greg Rochfort and Astrid Walden. Archive account by Greg Rochfort and Astrid Walden.

MAIDEN CASTLE SY 68 NE 24 Surveyed and researched by Duncan Black.

BINCOMBE HILL SY 68 NE 71 Surveyed and researched by Phil Bardswell and Peter Emery. Archive account by Peter Emery.

CAME WOOD SY 68 NE 72 Surveyed and researched by Roger Holehouse and Peter Sheaves. Archive account by Roger Holehouse.





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