

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PARISH OF FINDON, WEST SUSSEX

The Parish of Findon contains archaeology of national and international importance.

NEOLITHIC (c. 4,400-2,200 BC)

The earliest structural evidence which lies within the parish is the group of Neolithic flint-mines on Church Hill, Findon. These form part of the larger group of flint-mines which comprises Cissbury, adjacent to the southern boundary of the parish, and Blackpatch Hill and Harrow Hill (Russell 2001) close to the western margins. The Church Hill flint-mines have been dated to 4,340-4,250 BC (Renfrew 1974) and as such may be considered one of the earliest centres of 'industrial' activity in the UK. Past and future investigations of them will provide a crucial element of research into the lifestyles of the UK's first agriculturalists.

The downland block within the parish of Findon has also produced a large quantity of the characteristic Neolithic flintwork: this vital national assemblage includes polished and unpolished axes, scraping tools, discoidal knives, awls and leaf shaped arrowheads.

EARLY BRONZE AGE (c. 2,200-1,600 BC)

The parish contains a substantial number of Early Bronze Age burial monuments. The vast majority are of the type known as 'bowl barrows' and dispersed and nucleated groups of these monuments are recorded from Church Hill and environs (Grinsell 1934), now mostly 'ploughed out'. Other examples, either extant or much degraded, are recorded across the downland block to the north and east of Findon Gallops and a number of examples also exist in the vicinity of the eastern entrance and ramparts of Cissbury Iron-Age hillfort. Environmental evidence from the sealed sub-surface ditch fills of these barrows can potentially provide information concerning habitat reconstruction of Early Bronze Age landscapes.

LATER BRONZE AGE (c. 1,600 -700 BC)

The Later Bronze Age is a period of re-organisation and transformation in the agricultural landscape. It is in this period in S. England that settlement in the form of round-houses, fields, droveways and cremation cemeteries appear in the archaeological record (Yates 2007). Greater partitioning of the landscape occurred during this period.

Close to Tolmare Pond, Findon a 'cross ridge dyke' is recorded and these linear features are generally dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and are regarded as territorial or boundary markers (Hamilton and Manley 1997). On the eastern boundary of the parish at Park Brow (Wolseley *et al* 1927) a settlement site with terraced house platforms and of great longevity dating from the Late Bronze Age, overlooks the Stump Bottom 'dry' valley. The east facing side of the valley produced a Late Bronze Age metalwork hoard: the 'Stump

Bottom Hoard' which consists of arm-rings, known as 'Sussex Loops' and spearhead etc and is on view in Worthing Museum (White 1991) and at Canada Bottom adjacent to Stump Bottom a gold torc of the period is recorded (Dunkin 2000). These metalwork deposits may have had a sepulchral role and were probably the personal accoutrements of individuals living close by, eg Park Brow. Traces of the remains of prehistoric field boundaries, lynchets, may still be seen in places across this whole block of downs to the north of Cissbury Ring. A partitioned farmscape of fields and settlement from c. 1,500 BC should therefore be envisaged.

The discovery of a Later Bronze Age pit containing pottery adjacent to Cross Lane, Findon (Bedwin 1979; Drewett *et al* 1988) provides further direct evidence of settlement for the period within the parish.

IRON AGE (c. 700 BC-43 AD)

Although there may have been a hiatus in settlement at Park Brow the evidence demonstrates a continuity of occupation at this site into the Iron Age. The context of the Iron Age period in the parish is greatly enhanced by the presence of the nationally important Cissbury Iron Age hillfort. Dated to the Middle Iron Age, c. 400-200 BC, (Curwen and Ross-Williamson 1931; Hamilton and Manley 1997) and abutting the southern boundary, this is one of the largest developed or contour Iron Age hillforts in England. Enclosing 24 hectares its original construction and maintenance would have involved considerable co-operation from the people living in the satellite settlement sites from across the downland block within the parish. Sites like Park Brow and other observed settlement foci (Con Ainsworth pers. comm) attest to the continuing presence of a farmed landscape across the area in the closing centuries of the prehistoric period.

LATE IRON AGE (c. 150 BC-43 AD)/ROMAN (43 AD-410 AD)

In the late Iron Age and early Roman period another site of national importance exists in the west of the parish. At Muntham Court a field, taken out of cultivation in the post-war period, contains a considerable number of surface anomalies, ie 'humps and bumps'. Excavations in the 1950's revealed an extensive late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement site (Holleyman and Burstow 1956), containing house structures, remnant field boundaries, sunken trackways a circular shrine/temple site and in the adjacent field to the south an associated well, 76.2 metres deep. The latter has been described as a ritual shaft (Ross 1970). The shrine and well have produced votive material and of particular importance was the retrieval from the temple site of the bronze plaque of a boar, known as the 'Muntham Boar', also on view in Worthing Museum. More recently, corroborative evidence ties this site into a much wider landscape context. In the 1990's excavations of a Romano-British settlement within the parish at North Farm, Washington (pers.obs) uncovered a solid bronze figurine of a boar. The rescue excavations at Chanctonbury Ring in 1990/1 following the 1987 storm recovered a considerable quantity of pig bone and teeth

from the entrance portal of a polygonal early Roman shrine (Rudling 2001). All of these three sites are intervisible and this associative evidence strongly suggests a 'cult of the boar' existed in the area at this time. The figurines must be regarded as 'structured' deposits and are an important facet in the study of late prehistoric/Roman religious practices.

Early excavations at Park Brow also revealed an indigenous Romano-British settlement, with evidence of window glass and a key! (Wolseley Smith and Hawley 1927). This site with Bronze Age antecedents, see above, reflects the very long landscape history of farming in the parish. A Roman lynched field-system may be seen on the summit of Cissbury Ring and is preserved due to the early cessation of a ploughing regime within the hillfort. This location is intervisible with Park Brow.

The Heritage Environmental Record, HER, indicates a number of locations containing Roman artefactual material. In Findon Village, three sites, and in the vicinity of Tolmare Pond and adjacent to Long Furlong concentrations of Roman pottery including cinerary urns attest to the proximity of Roman settlement. Much of this evidence may be connected to the Muntham Court complex. At Findon Place the recording of Roman pottery and tile suggests a former Romanised building in the locality (Dunkin 2008). Close to the southwest margins of the parish near to Clapham and Patching a Roman pottery industry or production centre is conjectured (Dr Malcolm Lynes pers. comm).

ANGLO-SAXON (410-1066 AD)

Known archaeology for this period is notoriously elusive. St John the Baptist Church, Findon is dated to the Late Saxon period, see below, but nothing earlier is recorded. Archaeology can add nothing further at present.

Recent structural analysis of St John the Baptist Church incorporating earlier work, indicates that the north aisle had been constructed in the Late Saxon period, 10th-11th c. AD, and incorporates the original stone structure. For full discussion see Holmes 1989. Prior to the Saxo-Norman or Late Saxon period churches were thought to be timber structures and a few of these have been identified but none in the south-east (Gardiner 1988). These are of course difficult to locate, ephemeral in nature and only survive in particular environmental contexts. Findon may and indeed is likely to have earlier Saxon antecedents and this subject therefore has continuing and important research potential for both archaeologists and historians.

MEDIEVAL (1066-1500 AD)

The isolation of the parish church, St John the Baptist, and the adjacent Findon Place, thought to be the location of the original manor house, is of archaeological interest. The causes of migration or abandonment of villages in the medieval period is often argued to be due to the plague or black death in the middle decades of the 14th c. AD. There were certainly other factors which led to de-population in rural England and this includes changes

in economic fortune, soil impoverishment, floods and drought (Brandon 1998). These factors waxed and waned over the centuries. However, whatever the reason(s), the village of Findon sometime prior to the 17th century, migrated to the rising ground on the east side of the valley floor. Although The Square contains the oldest buildings in Findon Village, eg The Gun, medieval pottery was found during original groundwork construction within the Fox Lea estate (Dr David Yates pers. comm). This may have come from an earlier farm but it could also represent a domestic dwelling(s) and this could suggest that the early village community was more dispersed. This of course is mere speculation but much more work both archaeological and historical will need to be done to further the historical narrative of the village and parish.

Nevertheless, large quantities of medieval pottery and domestic waste, oyster etc, have been noted in the plough soil of the field opposite the parish church (Norman Allcorn pers. comm; pers. obs) so the focus of the original village, not unexpectedly, must lie here.

David Dunkin BA (Hons) MA PhD AIFA

13th August 2014

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES

Bedwin, O.R. 1979. 'Bronze Age Pottery from Cross Lane, Findon, West Sussex'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections*. Vol. 117. 254-255.

Brandon, P. 1998. *The South Downs*. Phillimore.

Curwen, E. and Ross-Williamson, R. 1931. 'The date of Cissbury Camp'. *Antiquaries Journal*. Vol. 11. 14-36.

Drewett, P. Rudling, D and Gardiner, M. 1988. *The South-East to AD 1000*. Longman. 77.

Dunkin, D. 2000. *A Contextual study of Later Bronze Age Metalwork Deposits in Sussex and Hampshire*. MA Thesis. University of Reading.

Dunkin, D. 2008. *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for St John the Baptist Church, Findon, West Sussex*. Planning Application for Findon PCC (Ref. DWS593).

Gardiner, M. 1988. In Drewett *et al* (above). 'The Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon Periods, 650-1000 AD' Chapter 8. 309-318.

Grinsell, L. 1934. 'Sussex Barrows'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections*. Vol. 75. 216-275.

Hamilton, S and Manley, J. 1997. 'Points of view: prominent enclosures in 1st millenium BC Sussex'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections*. Vol. 135. 93-112.

Holleyman, G. and Burstow, G. 1956. 'Excavations at Muntham Court, Findon'. *Sussex Notes and Queries*. Part 14. 196-198; 232-233.

Holmes, J. 1989. 'A Saxon Church at Findon' (Historical Notes). *Sussex Archaeological Collections*. Vol. 127. 252-254.

Renfrew, C (ed). 1974. *British Prehistory: a new outline*. Duckworth. 130.

Ross, A. 1970. *The Pagan Celts*. Batsford. 106.

Rudling, D. 2001. 'Chanctonbury Ring revisited: the excavations of 1988-91'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections*. Vol. 139. 112-118.

Russell, M (ed). 2001. *Rough Quarries, Rocks and Hills; John Pull and the Neolithic Flint Mines of Sussex*. Bournemouth University School of Conservation Sciences, Occasional Paper 6. Oxford: Oxbow.

White, S. 1991. 'A Sussex Loop from Patching, West Sussex'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections*. Vol. 129. 239-240.

Wolseley, R. Smith, R and Hawley, W. 1927. 'Prehistoric and Roman settlements on Park Brow'. *Archaeologia*. 76. 1-40.

Yates, D. 2007. *Land, Power and Prestige: Bronze Age Field Systems in Southern England*. Oxford: Oxbow.