Chapter 7: The Linear Ditch, the Ridgeway and the Enclosure

by Chris Gosden and Gary Lock

INTRODUCTION

A linear ditch runs up to Uffington hillfort along a ridge to the south of the fort (Fig. 7.1). This ditch has a total visible length on aerial photographs of over 2 km and appears to be similar to a number of ditches found in this area of the Berkshire Downs and more broadly across southern Britain. There has been considerable discussion in recent literature concerning these ditches, most of which are thought to have originated in the late Bronze Age. The original purposes of the ditches (Bradley *et al.* 1994) and their relationships to later hillforts (Cunliffe 1990) has been debated, together with other landscape features such as field systems.

A number of hillforts, such as Quarley Hill (Berks), appear to have been constructed on the junction of two or more linear ditches (ibid.), and if the ditches were a territorial division, their junctions might indicate the points at which different territories met. Hillforts located on these intersections, therefore, may have been associated with inter-territory and inter-group connections. At Uffington although there is evidence of only a single linear ditch in conjunction with the hillfort, there is also the Ridgeway, which runs beside the fort and it was thought possible that this may have had some association with the ditch. The Ridgeway may represent a form of connection rather than a barrier, and it is interesting that Uffington hillfort was constructed at a point at which a linear ditch and the Ridgeway meet. Excavations were undertaken, therefore, to try to determine whether there was any relationship between the linear ditch and the Ridgeway in prehistory. Also, it was hoped that the excavations might indicate whether these features had any connection with the hillfort.

The linear ditch is easily visible on the ground, running along a modern fence line at the top of the ridge, and immediately south of the fort it runs across a field and reaches the Ridgeway. Five trenches were excavated to examine the nature and age of the linear ditch and its relationship to both the Ridgeway and to a series of ridges and gullies of unknown date, which lie just to its south (Fig. 7.2).

THE LINEAR DITCH

Trench 1

This was the southernmost of the trenches, 4.0 × 1.0 m, which was cut at right angles to the main axis of the ditch, and lay south-west to north-east. A ditch approximately 2 m wide and 0.45 m deep was found (Fig. 7.3). It had a long irregular north-western side and a shallower south-eastern side, due to the natural slope of the bedrock. The ditch was filled at its base with a compact brown silt with chalk fragments (105) to a depth of roughly 0.2 m, and contained no finds. Sealing this deposit and spreading down from higher up the slope was a fairly compact light brown silt with chalk lumps (104), which was up to 0.29 m thick. This contained an iron spud of Roman date (Fig. 9.2.2), a small amount of Roman pottery and animal bone. This deposit (104) appears to represent the natural silting of the feature from material washed down the hill slope, and partly sealing it and extending over the whole of the north-west end of the trench was a loose light brown silt (103) with occasional chalk inclusions. It contained Roman pottery, animal bone and flint and represents a further episode of hillwash material accumulated at the base of the slope.

The base of the ditch (106) was rounded and cut into chalk bedrock. Overlying the natural chalk on either side of the ditch were two deposits (107 & 108). These appear to have been the base of a ploughsoil, and plough marks were found in the natural chalk running down the hill slope south-east to north-west. Butting up to the north-east of deposit 108 was a fine grey deposit with chalk inclusions (102) which was up to 0.22 m thick and devoid of finds. This was probably upcast from the ditch which may once have formed a bank subsequently destroyed by ploughing or other activities. Extending over the whole trench was a loose dark brown gritty silt with some chalk, which represents the modern topsoil (101). Unfortunately trench 1 offered no evidence of the original date of the linear ditch, but did show that its final silting occurred in the Romano-British period.

Trench 2

This was located north of trench 1 (Fig. 7.2) and was excavated to investigate any variability in the form of the linear ditch and whether further dating evidence could be obtained. The trench measured 9.5 m south-west to north-east and 1 m wide. In this trench the bedrock was overlain with a friable clay with many chalk inclusions found at both the north-eastern and south-western ends and this appeared to be a natural subsoil over the bedrock (Fig. 7.4, 203). Sealing this layer in the north-east was a compact orange-brown clay with some chalk and

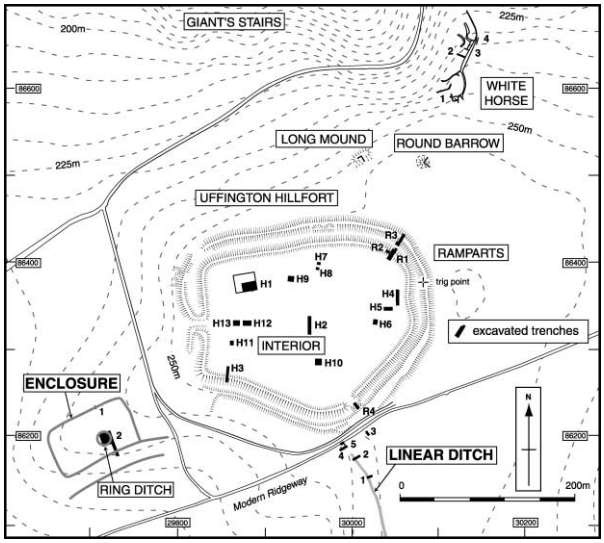


Figure 7.1 Location of linear ditch running south of Uffington Hillfort and of the rectangular enclosure to the west of the hillfort.

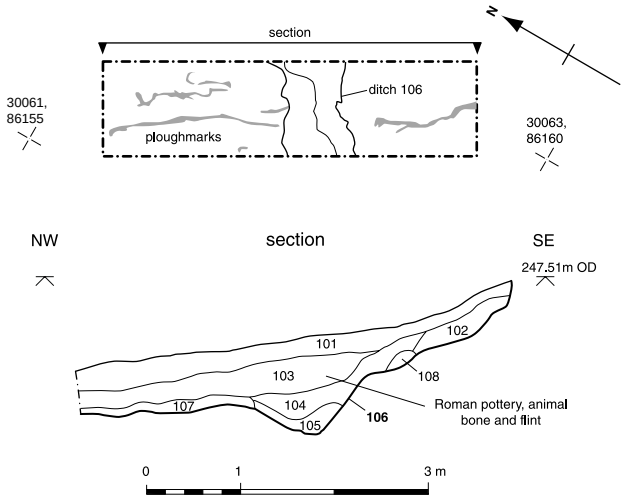


Figure 7.3 Plan and section of trench 1 on the linear ditch.

flint (202), which appeared to be a buried soil. These layers had been cleared away in the immediate vicinity of the linear ditch, which was about 1.8 m wide and 0.5 m deep and ran south-east to north-west across the trench. The ditch had sloping sides which were longer and more irregular on the north-east and a rounded bottom. The lowest fill was a compact, light brown clay with small amounts of chalk (208), which contained Romano-British pottery and represents the natural silting of the feature. Deposit 206 was sealed by a fairly compact light brown clay with few chalk fragments (205) and this extended to the south-west to overlap 203 and to the north-east to overlap 202. It contained Romano-British pottery and represents further silting of the feature. This was overlain by modern topsoil (201).

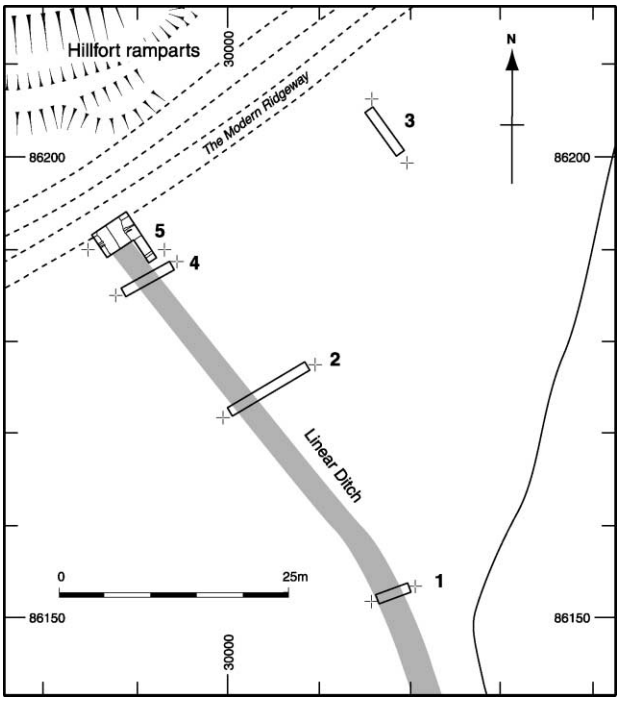


Figure 7.2 Location of trenches 1 to 5 on or close to the linear ditch.

Dating

Two dates were obtained from trench 2 using Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL, see Appendix 1 and Table A1.1). The date determination from context 206 (sample 967b) on feldspar was 4450 to 1450 BC, and on the quartz was 1550 to 550 BC. Later dates came from the lowest context 208 (sample 967c) which directly underlay 206 (Fig. 7.4): the determination on feldspar was 2200 to 200 BC and on quartz was 820 BC to AD 20. These dates are clearly problematical in terms of the stratigraphic relationships of the two contexts and in the discrepancy between the determinations on quartz and feldspar. The older dates for the feldspar determinations indicate that these samples were insufficiently

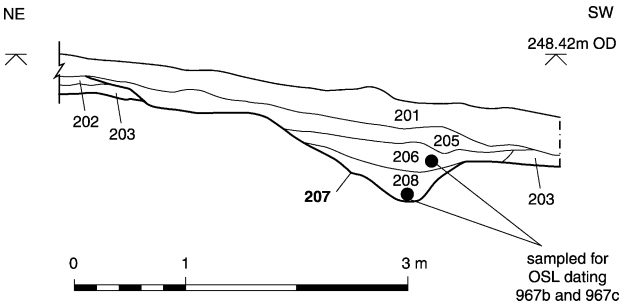


Figure 7.4 Section of trench 2 on the linear ditch.

bleached at deposition and the same may be true for the quartz dates. Therefore all the dates are likely to be over-estimates of the true ages of the sediments (Appendix 1). The quartz component of sample 967c is likely to have come nearest to being completely bleached but was still not necessarily fully bleached at deposition.

The artefactual dating therefore gives a more accurate indication of the age of the fill of the ditch, and the true date of the sediment could fall within the Romano-British period. This is counter to expectations based on fieldwork elsewhere on the Berkshire Downs, where linear ditches have been dated to the late Bronze Age.

Trench 4

This was located just south of the modern Ridgeway and positioned to provide a further section across the linear ditch. It was 6.1 m long from south-west to north-east and 0.5 m wide. The linear ditch ran south-east to north-west across the trench and was roughly 2.8 m wide and up to 0.98 m deep, with sloping sides and a rounded, but irregular, base. The lowest deposit was chalk shatter with fine sediments that may indicate the trench was open for some time. Within this material was a lens of dark brown and grey-green mottled clay with no finds. The sealing layer was a fine pale brown sediment with chalk fragments, sealed in turn by a fine light brown deposit with gravel sized chalk inclusions. Neither of these had any finds and probably represents further silting. Overlying was a loose light brown deposit with chalk fragments, without finds and this might be buried topsoil. This was sealed by modern topsoil again devoid of finds. The linear ditch appeared to be widening and becoming deeper towards its northern end. Lack of finds made dating problematical.

THE RIDGEWAY

Trench 3

This was located to the east of trench 4 and just south of the Ridgeway (Fig. 7.2). It was the only trench in this group not located on the linear ditch, and was excavated to throw light on the ridges and gullies in this area. The trench was 6 m long from south-east to north-west and 1 m wide. Running south-west to north-east across the north-western end of the trench was a linear feature (308) cut into the chalk bedrock (Fig. 7.5). This feature was about 1.4 m across and had a maximum depth of 1.3 m with a fairly flat base. The sides were sealed by frost-shattered chalk (304/305), although there was no evidence of frost shattering over the base of the feature. Partly sealing both the frost-shattering and the base of the feature was a light brown silt with small chalk inclusions (309) and this was overlain by a layer of loose chalk rubble in a fine pale brown matrix (307). This was sealed by a light brown deposit with small chalk inclusions (306), which was overlain by a loose light brown deposit (303) which contained a small amount of Romano-British pottery. Sealing deposit 303 to the north-west and south-east of the feature were small chalk fragments (302) and above this was modern topsoil (301).

Feature 308 might represent an earlier route of the Ridgeway, a pathway worn into the chalk. This would explain the smooth bottom of the feature and the chalk shatter along the sides. Deposits 309, 307, 306 and 303 may represent silting of the surface and the pottery in 303 indicates that this occurred during the Romano-British period.

Trench 5

This trench was placed to look at the relationship between the linear ditch and the Ridgeway. The trench ran across the linear ditch and was 4.5 m long south-west to north-east and 3 m wide and had a projection at right angles from the south-east corner which was 3 m long and 1 m wide (Fig. 7.2). The linear ditch (500) ran south-east to north-west across the trench, was a maximum of 2.8 m wide, and had a V-shaped profile with fairly regular straight sides and a slightly rounded base. The bottom fill consisted of chalk fragments in chalk dust (506) and contained no finds (Fig. 7.6). This probably represents upcast material that had fallen back into the ditch soon after it had been dug. Sealing this fill was a dark brown deposit with few chalk fragments

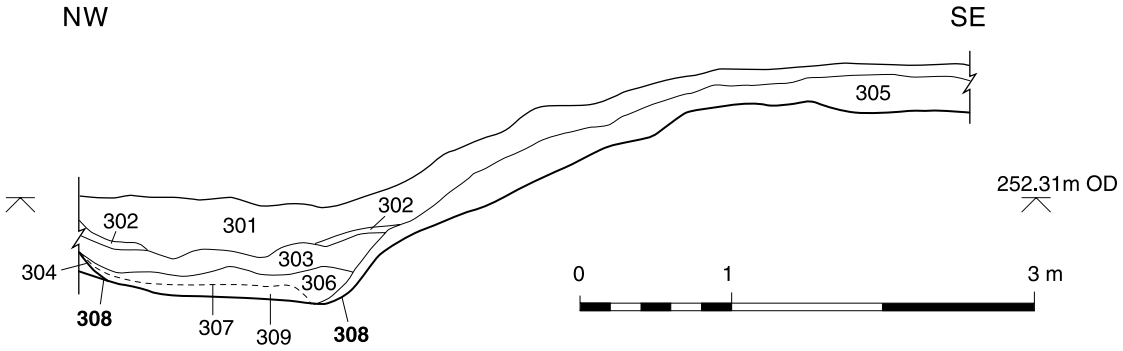


Figure 7.5 Section of trench 3 south of the Ridgeway.

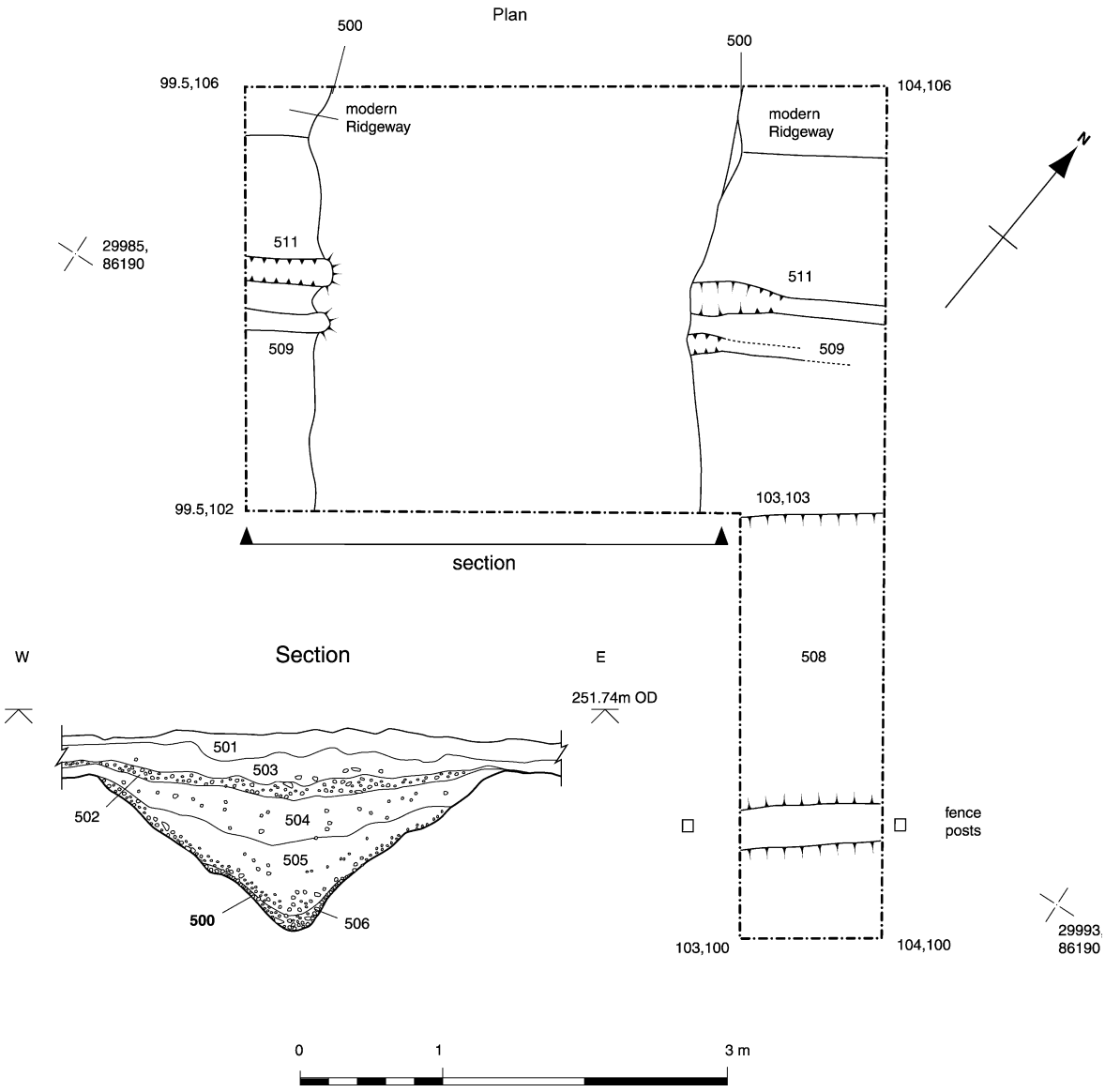


Figure 7.6 Plan and section of trench 5 on the linear ditch.

which was up to 0.5 m deep and contained Romano-British pottery (505). This deposit seems to post-date any use of the open ditch and represents the backfill of the feature. Sealing 505 was a pale brown deposit with few chalk fragments (504) and this contained Romano-British pottery, plus animal bone and might represent further backfill. Sealing 504 was a pale brown layer with many chalk fragments (502) and this appears to represent consolidating material dumped into the dip created by the sunken fill of the ditch.

Two features (509 & 511) were interpreted as wheel ruts which cut ditch fill 504 and probably also 503 and these ran just south of the modern line of the Ridgeway. Just to the north-west of the modern fence line was a depression (508). This may be interpreted as either a previous boundary in almost the same position as the modern field boundary, or a continuation of a gully (308, trench 3, Fig. 7.5) which formed part of an early trackway, possibly Romano-British. Sealing the boundary line and spreading partly across the chalk shatter (507) found in the base of 508 was a dump of light brown material which was a maximum of 0.64 m thick and would seem to represent a boundary bank. Sealing the bank was modern topsoil (501) and cutting this topsoil were modern wheel ruts connected with the present day Ridgeway.

Discussion

The linear ditch, as is often the case with such features, has proved difficult to date. The supposition prior to excavation was that this was a late Bronze Age feature, by analogy to linear ditches elsewhere, but the pottery that could be dated from

the silts of the ditch is Romano-British. The evidence from trench 5 is central to the history of the linear ditch, as contexts 506, 505 and 504 appear to have been material deliberately dumped into the linear ditch to fill it, and this appears to have taken place in the Romano-British period. All the Romano-British pottery from the ditch was sherds of sandy grey wares, probably of local origin and datable only to the 1st to 4th centuries AD.

The other evidence of the date of the ditch comes from OSL determinations from trench 2, results of which were incompatible with the Romano-British date for the pottery. It is surprising, given the expectation that the ditch was originally dug in the late Bronze Age as inferred by dates obtained on linear ditches elsewhere on the Berkshire Downs (Ford 1981–2; 1982), that Romano-British pottery should be the main source of dating and occur so low down in the ditch fill. There may be several explanations for this but two main possibilities. Firstly, it is possible that the linear ditch is late Bronze Age in date but was kept cleaned and open continually until the Romano-British period, so that there is over a millennium gap between the digging of the ditch and its final infilling. In this case the ditch was an active feature in the landscape in the Romano-British period and was regularly cleaned out, as there was no evidence of silting during the Iron Age.

The second possibility is that the ditch is a Romano-British feature which was filled not long after it was dug. However, it is also possible that the section of ditch excavated deviates in its line from the main body of the ditch (see Fig. 7.2) and may be of a later date than the rest of the ditch. Only further excavation could resolve this possibility. The other strand of evidence of relevance is the evidence from aerial photographs, which shows a cross-dyke cut by the linear ditch. This feature is undated, but a nearby Romano-British settlement appears to respect the cross-dyke and therefore this does not contradict a Romano-British date for the linear ditch.

Dating

Whatever the original date the linear ditch was still substantially open in the Romano-British period so that it needed deliberate filling. Indeed, the contrast in the profile of the ditch between trench 5 and trenches 1, 2 and 4 may indicate that the linear ditch further south from the Ridgeway was left open for longer and became more eroded as the more ragged profiles of the ditch seem to indicate. Here the silting contains Romano-British pottery from hillwash which may have washed into the linear ditch during that period or some time later.

The results of these excavations pose questions about the history of the linear ditch, but they do appear to clarify the history of the Ridgeway in this area. Irrespective of when it was first dug, the linear ditch seems to have been open until the Romano-British period, and in the area investigated by trench 5 it seems to have been deliberately infilled. This infilling may have been to allow the Ridgeway trackway to pass over the line of the linear ditch. The possible line of the Ridgeway uncovered in trench 3 also contained Romano-British pottery and reinforces this idea. Therefore, the Ridgeway could not have run on its present course between the late Bronze Age and the Romano-British period due to the existence of the linear ditch. It is possible that the Ridgeway could have run through the hillfort before the blocking of the eastern entrance as discussed in the previous chapter. This leaves a gap in time between the blocking of the eastern entrance in perhaps the 4th century BC and the movement of the Ridgeway to its present position some time within the Romano-British period. Either the Ridgeway did not exist during this time or it ran between the hillfort and the White Horse along the very edge of the chalk escarpment. Such continual movement seems to suggest that the route of the Ridgeway was determined by practical considerations, where people tried to find a route which minimised the energy expended in travelling, and possibly also the route may have changed when parts of the track became worn and unusable. In addition, the route may have been altered to direct movement around the various features of the hilltop, thus linking the locations in different ways at various periods of the past.

Movement along the Ridgeway

To a large extent this argument is based on computer modelling of movement along the Ridgeway (Bell and Lock 2000). When looking at the topography of this area of the Downs it is very apparent that the 'grain' runs north to south with a series of dry valleys providing relatively easy movement in those directions. Moving from east to west is much more difficult and the Ridgeway, following the edge of the chalk scarp, seems to provide the most accessible route. By generating a 'least cost' path between Barbury Castle (further to the west along the Ridgeway) and Segsbury Camp it was shown that the modern Ridgeway does, in fact, approximately follow the route of least effort (Fig. 7.7). A least cost surface is generated from a Digital Terrain Model so that each cell (in this case a 10 m square of ground in reality) holds a value of effort to cross it (this is usually based on slope but other criteria can be factored in). A least cost path is simply the pathway between two specified points using the information within the least cost surface to determine movement from cell to cell.

Comparing the generated (least cost) Ridgeway with the route of the modern Ridgeway it can be seen that the fit is fairly good although there are some interesting deviations around the hillforts. At Liddington Castle, Hardwell Camp and Rams Hill the generated Ridgeway leaves the modern route to pass through the hillforts (details in Fig. 7.7). One possible interpretation of this is that the Ridgeway is a very old routeway based on the principle of least effort thus avoiding the barriers of the north-south dry valleys.

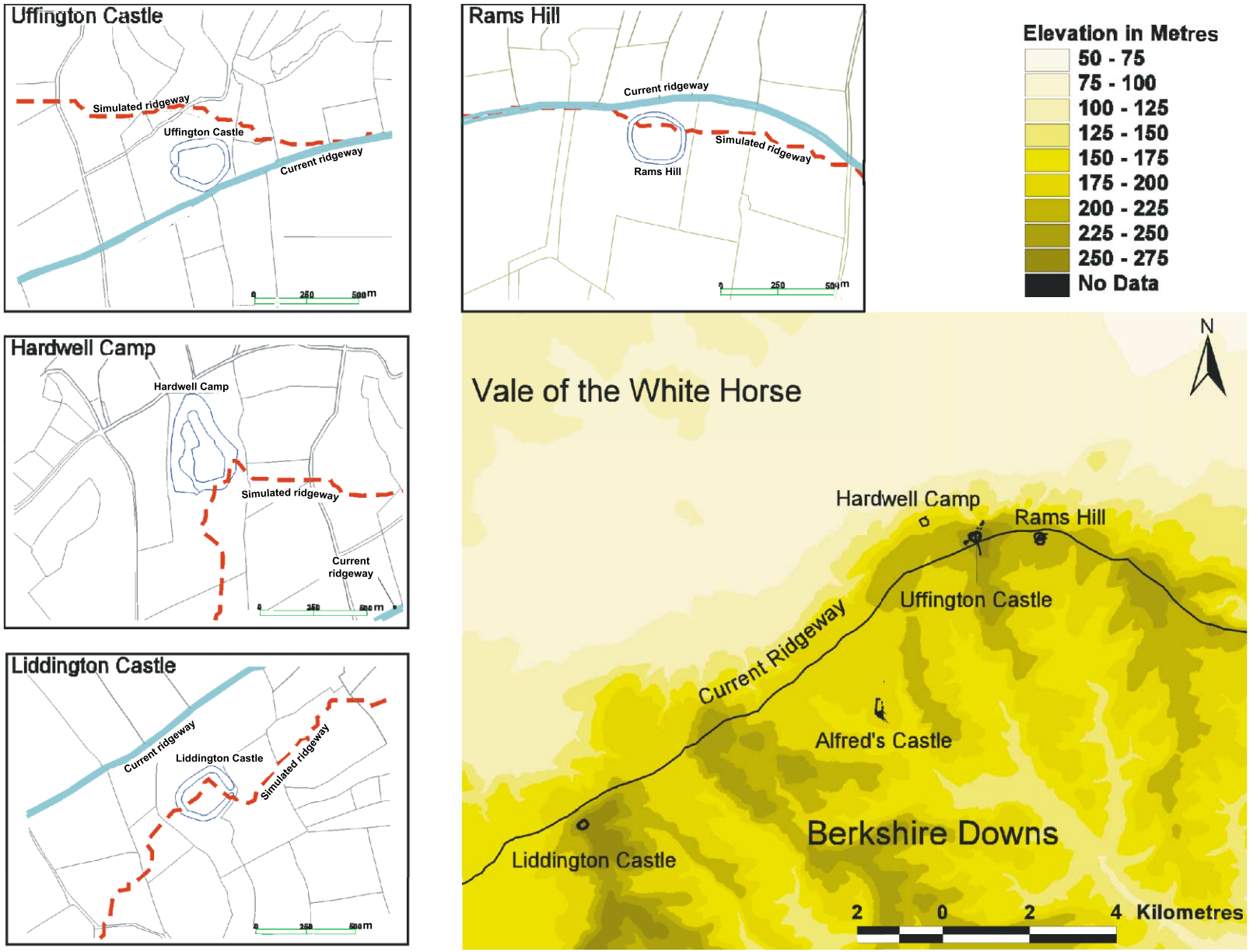


Figure 7.7 The Ridgeway in the area of White Horse Hill. The detail shows the computer simulated Ridgeway and the current Ridgeway at the sites of Liddington Castle, Hardwell Camp, Uffington Castle and Rams Hill.

While such a deterministic procedure would not necessarily apply to human movement because of cultural and other influences, it seems reasonable to accept it for animals, especially the movement of herds. The long-recognised positioning of Neolithic sites along the route of the Ridgeway supports the argument that it predates that period and had been adopted as a human routeway by that time.

If this pre-Iron Age dating of the Ridgeway is accepted it follows that the hillforts in this area could have been located to incorporate the already existing track and the evidence for original opposing entrances seems to support this. Investigations have suggested that both Liddington and Uffington had opposing entrances while the original plans of Hardwell and Rams Hill are not so clear. The generated Ridgeway can be seen to go through Liddington, into Hardwell and through Rams Hill. For whatever reasons, with the blocking of one of the entrances, the Ridgeway could no longer go through the centre of Liddington and Rams Hill so in both cases the route moved slightly to the north where it still survives. Uffington Castle is different because the generated Ridgeway does not pass through the two original entrances of the hillfort but here special circumstances can be claimed, the route does go between the White Horse and the hillfort. As described above, if the linear ditch to the south of Uffington remained open well into the Romano-British period the Ridgeway would have run to the north of the hillfort. This occurred in the period between the blocking of the eastern entrance and the filling of the linear ditch, and the establishment of the Ridgeway on its present route during the late Romano-British period.

There is also an argument for Uffington being located to maximise visual impact and increase its significance as a site of wider importance. The second part of the computer study (ibid.) explored the visibility characteristics of the hillforts in this area from the perspective of walking along the Ridgeway. Through the use of cumulative viewshed analysis a visibility index was established for the area 3 km either side of the Ridgeway. A viewshed is the area visible from a particular point and one was generated for each point at 250 m intervals along the Ridgeway. Adding these viewsheds together gives an index of visibility which can be shown on a plan of the area so that each value represents the number of places from which that area is visible, so that the higher the index value the more 'visible' is that location for anyone walking along the Ridgeway. It follows from this that if the hillforts are located in areas with a high visibility index it could be argued that they were located to maximise local (within 3 km) visible impact. This was not the case and the hillforts appear not to be located to be visible from the Ridgeway. While this is interesting for Liddington, Hardwell, Rams Hill and Segsbury it does seem to contradict the intuitive sense of the location of Uffington which provides views of the site from considerable distances from the north in the Vale and from the Downs to the south. This could be related to the wider interpretation of Uffington as discussed in Chapter 6, and its significance as a regional centre which gives primacy to visibility from a distance rather than from nearby.

THE ENCLOSURE

The final feature excavated during 1995 was an enclosure on a low hill immediately to the west of the hillfort (Fig. 7.1). Both excavation and geophysical survey were carried out.

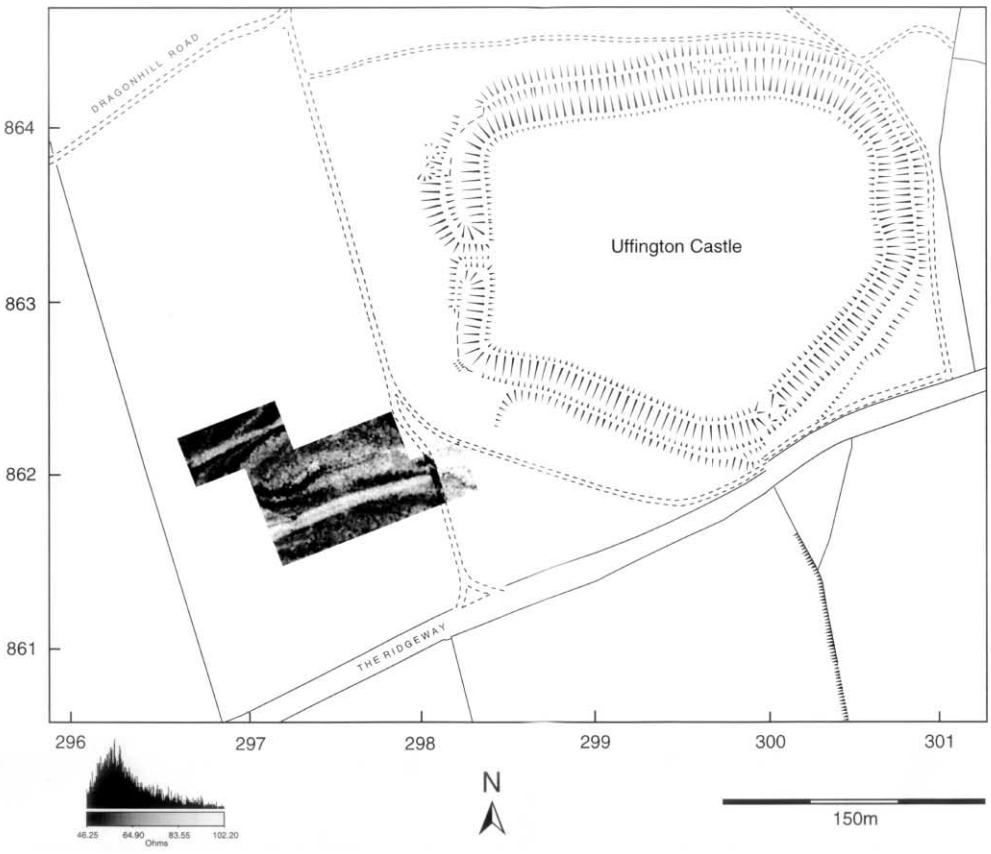
Geophysical survey
by Andrew Payne

This site was initially noted as a series of soil-marks on an aerial photograph dating from 1937. It was hoped that geophysical survey would be able to reveal more of the nature and layout of the enclosure, including the presence of entrances and any features contained within it.

No anomalous readings to indicate the presence of an archaeological site were encountered during an initial magnetic scan over the approximate position of the enclosure using a Geoscan FM36 fluxgate gradiometer. A resistivity survey was then carried out, but as this technique is time consuming only selected areas were examined. A Twin Electrode configuration was employed with a mobile probe spacing of 0.5 m in combination with a Geoscan Research RM15 resistivity meter. Readings were taken at 1.0 m intervals on a 30 m grid.

The pattern of resistivity variation mapped in the area of the possible enclosure was confused and irregular suggesting that the results were influenced by natural features (Fig. 7.8). Two broad linear high resistance anomalies were mapped running approximately parallel to each other on a west to south-west to east to north-east alignment along the slopes to either side of the higher ground on which the enclosure is sited. Between these anomalies and higher up the sides of the hill were a series of low resistance curvilinear anomalies that may represent ditches. To the south these took the form of two concentric curvilinear anomalies suggestive of a double ditched feature, but due to the limited survey coverage it was not possible to determine if these anomalies changed direction and met up in the areas beyond the limits of the survey to form a continuous boundary compatible with the regular plan of an enclosure.

The linear high resistance anomalies were straighter and more regular than the curving low resistance anomalies and therefore more certainly anthropogenic, but they were not easily interpretable as ditches. High resistance alignments tend to suggest features such as trackways with a hardened surface or plough-flattened field boundaries, lynchets or banks, although they could represent ditches if these had a loose chalk rubble fill. The form of the curvilinear low resistance anomalies was difficult to reconcile with the rectangular plan of the enclosure suggested by excavation and the aerial photographs.



Resistivity survey over position of soilmarks recorded by aerial photography in 1937 SW of Uffington Hillfort

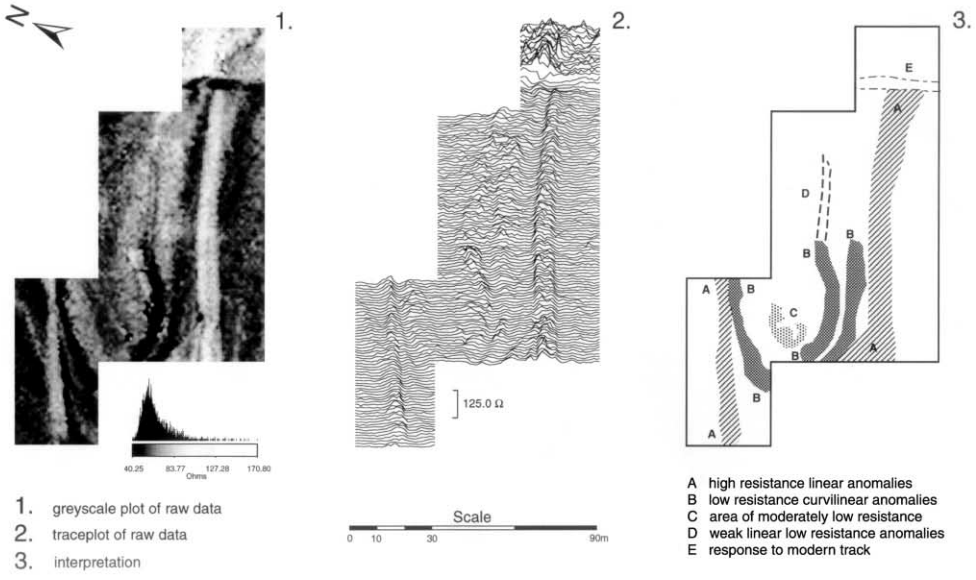


Figure 7.8 Geophysical survey of the enclosure ditch west of the hillfort.

Unfortunately the survey results were ambiguous and failed to convincingly confirm the presence of the enclosure as suggested. It is probable that the linear high resistance anomalies represent archaeological features linked to those visible on the aerial photographs. There was no geophysical indication of the internal ring ditch feature later uncovered during excavation. This is no doubt explained by the narrow and shallow cross section of the plough truncated ditch cutting and the lack of a measurable electrical

contrast between the very chalky ditch-fill and the surrounding natural chalk subsoil.

Excavations in 1995

At the base of the hill in trench 1 (Fig. 4.16) a linear feature 0.5 m deep with broadly sloping sides and base was found which ran south-west to north-east across the width of the trench. It was cut into chalk bedrock and was up to 6 m wide, although its exact width was difficult to determine as it was shallow and lacked distinct edges. The fill consisted of fairly compact clay with few chalk inclusions. This feature appeared to represent the remains of a shallow linear gully, probably the northern side of the rectangular enclosure. Cutting bedrock was a series of small postholes filled with black organic material, but lacking in any finds. These were a maximum of 0.1 m across and 0.1 m deep and appear to represent a fence line running along the north-west edge of the linear gully, along the outside of the enclosure. Sealing all the fills of features in this trench was modern topsoil.

At the southern end of trench 2 (Fig. 4.16) was a linear feature about 0.7 m wide, with a flat base and a maximum depth of 0.2 m. This was cut into the steep slope of the hill so that the northern side cut vertically into the chalk, with the southern side having a shallower slope, as it was near the base of the slope. This was filled with chalk rubble, which sealed a deposit of fine chalk fragments overlain in turn by chalky clay which contained Roman pottery and burnt clay. Over this was a deposit of small chalk fragments in brown clay up to 1.8 m thick, which was overlain in turn by modern topsoil. The shallow ditch seems to be the southern boundary of an enclosure of Romano-British date. There was no evidence of a fence line, as found in trench 1. The chalk in both trenches was scored with modern plough marks.

These excavations revealed that a rectangular enclosure probably dating to the Romano-British period, defined by a shallow ditch, ran round the base of the hill, with the hill sloping up steeply in the inside. The only interior feature of Romano-British date to give any clue to the nature and purpose of the enclosure was the skeleton in the top of the ring ditch of the barrow, although it is likely that any features or skeletons not dug into the chalk may have been destroyed by ploughing. At some time, the enclosure seems to have had a fence along the north-western side, but not the south-eastern. Showing up on some aerial photographs is a possible trackway leading from this enclosure to the Ridgeway and this helps reinforce the idea that the Ridgeway in its present position may only date to the Romano-British period. The Ridgeway may have been located in that period to bring together activities around the White Horse Hill and hillfort. One centre of activity in this period would have been this enclosure. It is likely that the ring ditch, or possibly a barrow if a mound existed, was still visible during the Romano-British period sited on the highest point of ground within the enclosure. The barrow may have represented a centre of Romano-British activity and perhaps burial, most traces of which have been destroyed.

DISCUSSION

White Horse Hill has had a long and complex history of human use and the excavation of these smaller features around the hillfort and the Horse serves to emphasise this, together with the importance of boundaries and movement across them. Many of the recent re-evaluations of hillforts have looked at the nature of the banks and ditches around them, suggesting that these were not defences in many cases, but some sort of symbolic boundary dividing insiders from outsiders (Bowden and McOmish 1987; 1989; Hingley 1990), within a social context which placed much more emphasis on who was within or outside the group (Thomas 1997).

Whilst these ideas are acceptable, it needs to be stressed that banks and ditches of different types are not static in their meanings and their significance, but cultural resources to be used in different ways at different times. Inside versus outside and us versus them were not static dichotomies, but issues which were worked out through using the construction of banks and ditches as vital material means. The digging of a linear ditch or the blocking of a hillfort entrance changed the patterns of movement around the Hill, as did the alteration of the route of the Ridgeway, and such movement is fundamental to social interaction and relationships. Movement was fundamentally altered by new structures on the hilltop, but a basic part of sociability also revolved around the construction and maintenance of the features themselves. As pointed out elsewhere (Gosden and Lock 1998), the features created in a landscape would have had links to people of the past, and therefore undertaking work on these features could be used to maintain these links. The regular clearing out of the linear ditch, which may have taken place right through the Iron Age, would have been more than just of practical significance and the deliberate filling of its northern end in order to run the Ridgeway through this area would have marked the end of this active connection. Barriers were never static or of singular meaning, but were created and then recreated in a different form to change those meanings or to negate earlier conceptions.

Ditches and banks were objects of continued human action and changing concepts. They may also have been used to highlight aspects of the Hill which were perceived to be important. The Romano-British enclosure around the hill to the west of the hillfort appears to have had a single feature inside, a ring ditch which could have been a Bronze Age barrow. This ditch was then used for the burial of a Romano-British skeleton, and there may even have been more skeletons if a barrow did exist. One possibility is that the enclosure was constructed to highlight the ring ditch and the activities taking place on and around it in the Romano-British period.