

L7B Lambourn Seven Barrows

Historic Character

This zone defines the extent of the Bronze Age barrow cemetery known as Lambourn Seven Barrows and related monuments. The zone stands near the head of a substantial dry valley that leads from the high downs to the Lambourn valley at Lambourn. Historically, the zone was covered by downland grassland and several routes across the downs converged at the barrows. Early in the 19th century a farm was established at Seven Barrows, and the downland enclosed into fields by Act of Parliament. Sevenbarrows Farm has now become a racing stable and the majority of this zone is covered by a mix of paddocks, gallops and arable areas. There has been some redevelopment and the addition of new stable facilities at the farm buildings. Many of the earthwork barrows are under grassland or survive as unmown areas within gallops and fields.

Historic Environment

The HER records for this zone are dominated by the Bronze Age funerary monuments. There was a programme of excavation on the barrows from 1850s, but although of a high standard for the time, the work was not fully published. Small scale further work followed in the late 19th century. The zone was covered by both the National Mapping Programme and the Berkshire Downs Survey and recent construction work has been subject to archaeological watching briefs. The core of the barrow cemetery and most of the barrows are scheduled monuments.

The earliest monument in this zone is a Neolithic long barrow lying on the County boundary with Oxfordshire, immediately north of Sevenbarrows Farm. This was amongst features investigated in the 1850s as well as previously by a local farmer, but it received additional attention in 1964 when a rescue excavation was mounted following extensive ploughing. Very little remained of the mound, but it was found to have a central core of sarsens with a cist burial at the east end.

The barrow cemetery itself consists of over 40 barrows; about 20 of them survive as earthworks and the remainder are known from cropmarks. The core of the cemetery is a group of at least 10 barrows arranged in two parallel rows, with the remaining mounds dispersed over a wide area to the north and south (including a few in Oxfordshire). There are several types of barrows within the cemetery, including bowl barrows and saucer barrows. The 1850s excavations yielded numerous finds including cremation burials and animal bones. Small-scale excavations in the late 1970s at Barrow 19 have shown that satellite burials also exist and a cremation pit on the edge of this barrow was dated to 1888-1671 BC. Fieldwalking between the long barrow and Sevenbarrows Farm found early Neolithic to late Bronze Age flintwork and sherds of late Bronze Age to early Iron Age pottery. Recent construction work at Sevenbarrows Farm led to the discovery of an undated crouched inhumation and further flintwork.

The area of the barrow cemetery was incorporated into an extensive Romano-British field system, but there seems to have been little activity between this and the construction of Sevenbarrows Farm in the early 19th century. However, there is the suggestion that some of the secondary interments may have been early medieval inhumations, as found in several other Bronze Age barrows in the district. A bronze brooch possibly found in one of the Seven Barrows in 1879 was identified as Saxon.

Despite recent re-construction, historic elements to the buildings at Sevenbarrows Farm seem to survive. The farmstead is recorded on the HER but no buildings are listed and nothing is known of their nature or significance. Sevenbarrows Farm is an isolated farm and such farms are

Historic Environment Character Zone

generally not common in this part of the downs. There is one listed building within this zone, the 18th to 19th century Longacre Farmhouse.

Historic Environment Potential

This zone contains significant extant Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments. The zone as a whole has a high potential for deposits relating to these features including burials. The extent of survival of primary funerary deposits at the ploughed-out examples is less clear. The zone is also likely to contain deposits related to Romano-British field systems. The nature and importance of the surviving historic buildings is unknown and it is possible that significant 19th century buildings or structural remains could exist.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- Management of core group of barrows by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust continues and needs to be monitored. Recent fencing and rabbit removal will need to be monitored. Effects of grazing livestock will also require close monitoring.
- Need to remove outlying barrows from ploughing, especially those that remain visible as earthworks.
- Condition and management of other surviving barrows, as islands within the gallops also require monitoring.
- The right of way across the long barrow needs to be diverted on to the existing farm track that currently runs around the eastern end of the barrow.
- Long term efforts to remove modern hedges/shelter belts and reintegrate the barrow cemetery into a single landscape block should be a key objective.
- Ensure that any future development at the racing stable does not compromise the future management and interpretation of the barrow cemetery.

Research Potential

- What is the full date range and chronology of the barrow cemetery?
- Is it possible to understand the landscape context of the barrow cemetery, especially the relationship between the barrow cemetery and the Bronze Age site of Ram's Hill, Oxfordshire, about 3km to the northwest?
- Does any related Bronze Age settlement activity exist nearby?
- Can any definite evidence be found of secondary burials of early medieval date?
- What is the historic importance of the farm and its recent use as a racing stable?