GB Great Britain

GB 1 Blackpatch
GB 2 Church Hill
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GB 4 Harrow Hill
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GB 4 HARROW HILL NEAR FINDON, WEST SUSSEX

Robin Holgate

Harrow Hill (NGR TQ082100) is false-crested on the northern, eastern and southern side of the westernmost of the four highest hills on the Downs north of Worthing, West Sussex. Over 100 circular depressions indicative of the top of shafts are visible and these were dug to exploit four seams of nodular flint outcropping on the hillside.

In 1924–25 one of the shafts on the northern edge of the site was excavated by the Worthing Archaeological Society under the direction of E. Cecil Curwen (Curwen and Curwen 1926). The shaft was 7 metres deep and 6.5 metres in diameter; it cut through three flint seams. The first seam appears not to have been worked but the second seam had been exploited by galleries on the east and west sides of the shaft and by open-cast mining on the north side from the point where the flint seam outcropped on the hillside. The third seam, at the base of the shaft, was worked from six galleries radiating out from the north, west and south sides of the shaft; two of

Fig. 1. GB 4 Harrow Hill. Aerial view looking south-east in 1976. Photo: O. Bedwin.
these galleries linked up with galleries from two neighbouring shafts. A variety of antler and bone tools was recovered, including picks, rakes and ox shoulder-blade shovels. Chalk blocks with scratch markings on them were also found, as were criss-cross lines and ladder patterns scratched on the wall of the shaft beside the entrance to a gallery. Numerous flint flakes were found throughout the fill of the shaft, along with ten clusters (referred to as “nests”: Curwen and Curwen 1926:132–3) of axe-thinning flakes, over 50 axe roughouts or preforms, cores and a hammerstone.

In 1936 the Worthing Archaeological Society, under the direction of George Holleyman, excavated three small shafts on the summit of the hill (Holleyman 1937). They varied between 3 and 4 metres in depth and were about 2 metres in diameter, having been dug to exploit two flint seams. Antler and bone mining tools were recovered, along with a few “nests” of flakes and about 50 axe roughouts and preforms.

In 1982 Gale Sieveking, with assistance from P.J. Felder, excavated the shaft at Harrow Hill immediately north-west of the one opened by Curwen in 1924–25. He also investigated the area in the vicinity of this shaft in 1984, in search of a flint-working area. In 1984 the author carried out a surface artefact collection survey of the ploughed field on the southern edge of the main cluster of flint mines, locating a flint-working area 50 metres in diameter (Holgate 1991:35). In 1986 the

Fig. 2. GB 4 Harrow Hill. A gallery at the base of the shaft excavated in 1982, showing remains of flint nodules that were being mined. Scale 20 cm. Photo: J. Lech.
author excavated the flint-working area, which yielded soft hammer-struck axe-thinning flakes, axe roughouts and cores, and a series of circular depressions indicative of the top of shafts that were visible on the surface. These depressions, situated immediately north-east and east of the flint-working area, turned out to overlie a series of open-cast pits dug to a depth of up to 2 metres from which short galleries extended to exploit a single seam of flint that outcropped on the surface at this part of the site. Analysis of molluscs from the fills of the shaft excavated by Sieveking (Kerney 1983) and the open-cast pits on the southern side of the hill (James Hart and Ken Thomas pers. comm.) suggests that the mines were being dug through forest. Five radiocarbon dates produced on charcoal from the shaft excavated by Sieveking range from 3400 ± 150 bc (BM-2098R) to 2950 ± 120 bc (BM-2071R), whilst a date of 3090 ± 120 bc (BM-2099R) was produced on a piece of antler that was found 5 centimetres above the floor of one of the galleries (Burleigh, Ambers and Matthews 1984:62–3; Ian Kinnes pers. comm.). These dates correlate favourably with the date of 2980 ± 150 bc (BM-182) produced from antler excavated by Curwen (Burleigh 1975).

The flint mines at Harrow Hill were in operation during the earlier Neolithic period. A maximum of 80 shafts were sunk on the upper slopes of the hill, with

Fig. 3. GB 4 Harrow Hill. Entrance to a gallery in the open-cast mining area on the south side of the site excavated in 1986. Photo: R. Holgate.
open-cast mining taking place around the northern and southern, and probably eastern, fringes of the site, where flint seams outcropped at the surface. One substantial flint-working area, where mainly axe roughouts and preforms were manufactured, is located on the more gently sloping southern side of the hill, immediately adjacent to an area of open-cast mining. No traces of working areas were found during excavations either on the steeper sloping northern side of the hill in 1984 or on the summit of the hill in 1936. There is no evidence for activity during the later Neolithic period and earlier Bronze Age.

Excavation by E. Cecil Curwen of a later Bronze Age settlement at New Barn Down, nearly 1 km to south, located a pit which contained burnt material, flint implements which included two axes and fragments of several earlier Neolithic plain bowl pottery vessels (Curwen 1934). Although interpreted by Curwen as a pit dwelling, this pit is more likely to contain votive offerings. Later Bronze Age pottery was recovered from the surface of the southern side of the hill; this indicates that this part of the site was farmed from a nearby settlement, possibly New Barn Down, in the late 2nd millennium bc.

REFERENCES


GB 6 LONG DOWN NEAR CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX

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Long Down (NGR SU932093) lies on the southern edge of the South Downs to the north of Chichester, West Sussex, and was originally excavated to extract flint nodules from a single seam. About 30 circular depressions which resemble the top of