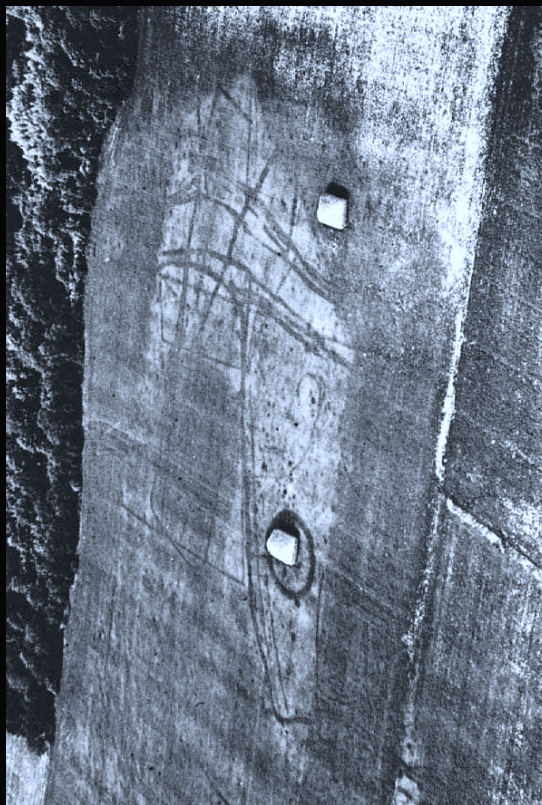
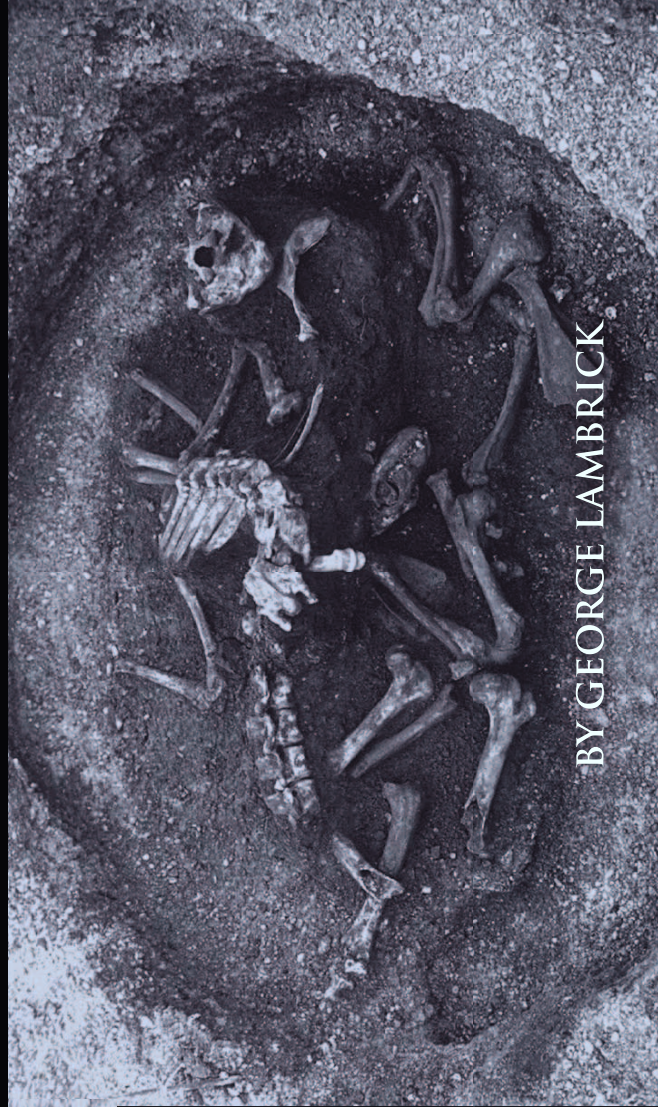


Excavations in the late 1970s at Mount Farm revealed evidence for human activity extending from the early Neolithic to the early Saxon periods. The site, which lies on the Thames gravels north of Dorchester-on-Thames, contained an array of significant prehistoric features, including an oval barrow enclosing middle Neolithic and beaker burials, a post circle and a Bronze Age ring ditch with cremation and inhumation burials, along with evidence for domestic and agricultural activity. An early to middle Iron Age settlement and field system developed continuously through into the Roman period, while traces of early Saxon settlement were also encountered.

The long sequence of activity at Mount Farm is matched by an unusually long sequence of environmental evidence, which has revealed important information on landscape changes over the millennia.



NEOLITHIC TO SAXON SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AT MOUNT FARM BERINSFIELD, DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES



BY GEORGE LAMBRICK

NEOLITHIC TO SAXON SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AT MOUNT FARM BERINSFIELD, DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES

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Neolithic to Saxon social and environmental change at Mount Farm, Berinsfield, Dorchester-on-Thames

by George Lambrick

with contributions by

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Sarah Lucas, Magda Wachnik and Julia Moxham

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Summary

Mount Farm is a multiperiod cropmark site on the Thames gravels north of Dorchester-on-Thames. It was initially excavated by J N L Myres in 1933, and this report covers more detailed work carried out in 1977-8 prior to the destruction of most of the site through gravel extraction. This established a longer chronological sequence than had previously been recognised, extending from the early or middle Neolithic to the early Saxon periods (3500 cal BC – cal AD 650) with all intervening-periods at least sporadically represented and the apparently continuous existence of a farming community from the Iron Age until the 3rd century cal AD.

Aspects of interest include:

- Early/middle Neolithic and late Neolithic domestic pits
- An oval barrow enclosing middle Neolithic and beaker burials
- A Neolithic or Bronze Age post ring
- An early to middle Bronze Age ring ditch with

cremation and inhumation burials and small quantities of domestic or feasting debris;

- A pit associated with burnt stone and charcoal and a middle to late Bronze Age waterhole
- Part of an early or middle Bronze Age double-ditched field system aligned on the barrow
- Early Iron Age ard cultivation marks
- Early Iron Age to late Roman settlement with an unusually early network of paddocks or fields that developed continuously from the middle Iron Age through to the 2nd century cal AD, including a succession of further waterholes
- Traces of early Saxon settlement including two wells, one using the remains of a wooden tub.

Mount Farm provides an unusually long, though somewhat patchy sequence of environmental evidence, and indications of the nature of a relatively low-key site within the hinterland of a series of major focal complexes in and around Dorchester-on-Thames.

Résumé

Mount Farm est un site d'occupation diachronique, visible par prospection aérienne, du *Thames gravels* au nord de Dorchester-on-Thames. Les premières fouilles sur ce site furent initiées par JNL Myres en 1933, et ce rapport couvre les études plus détaillées conduites entre 1977 et 1978, avant que la majeure partie du site ne soit détruite par des travaux d'extraction de graviers. Il présente une séquence chronologique plus longue que celle qui fut initialement établie, remontant du néolithique ancien/moyen jusqu'au début de l'ère saxonne (de 3500 av. J.-C. à 650 ap. J.-C.). Il présente toutes les périodes intermédiaires, y compris celles qui n'existent que de manière sporadique, et révèle la présence d'une communauté agricole depuis l'Âge de Fer, jusqu'au IIIème siècle après J.-C.

Éléments importants:

- Des fosses domestiques du Néolithique ancien/moyen et du néolithique final.
- Un tumulus ovale contenant des sépultures du néolithique moyen et de l'ère campaniforme.
- Un cercle de poteaux datant de l'Âge de Bronze ou du néolithique.
- Une fosse circulaire datant de l'Âge de Bronze ancien à moyen, contenant des crémations et inhumations, ainsi que de petites quantités de déchets domestiques ou de festin.

- Une fosse associée à de la pierre rubéfiée et du charbon, et un point d'eau de l'Âge de Bronze moyen à final.
- Une partie d'un système de champs à double-fossé de l'Âge de Bronze ancien à moyen, aligné sur le tumulus.
- Des traces de culture aratoire du début de l'Âge de Fer.
- Un habitat du début de l'Âge de Fer et la fin de la période romaine, dotée d'un réseau inhabituellement précoce d'enclos et de prés qui se sont développés de façon continue depuis le milieu de l'Âge de Fer jusqu'au IIème siècle après J.-C., comprenant une série de points d'eau supplémentaires.
- Des traces d'un habitat du début de la période saxonne comprenant deux puits, dont un reprend les restes d'un bac en bois.

Mount Farm fournit une séquence environnementale, inhabituellement longue bien qu'assez inégale, et des indications sur la nature d'un site d'importance relativement modérée dans l'arrière-pays d'une série de grands ensembles majeurs à la fois dans Dorchester-on-Thames et dans ses alentours.

Translated by Catherine Person

Zusammenfassung

Mount Farm ist ein auf den Thames Gravels nördlich von Dorchester-on-Thames gelegenes Areal mit einer Anhäufung von Bewuchsmerkmalen verschiedenster Perioden.

Die Stätte wurde ursprünglich 1933 von J. N. L. Myres ausgegraben. Der hier verfasste Bericht beschäftigt sich mit der Grabung die 1977-8 durchgeführt wurde und der Zerstörung eines Großteils der Stätte durch Kiesgewinnung vorausgegangen war.

Durch die Grabung wurde an dieser Stelle eine länger als bisher angenommene chronologische Sequenz nachgewiesen, welche durch alle Perioden - zumindest sporadisch - vom frühen oder mittleren Neolithikum bis zur Sachsenzeit reicht (3500 v. Chr. - 650 n. Chr.) und scheinbar in Form einer Farmgemeinschaft von der Eisenzeit bis ins 3. Jhr. n. Chr. vortgeführt wurde.

Interessante Gesichtspunkte dieser Stätte sind:

- Früh-/mittelneolithische und spätneolithische domestische Gruben
- Ein ovaler Grabhügel mit mittelneolithischen und Beaker Bestattungen
- Ein neolithischer oder bronzezeitlicher Pfostenring
- Ein früh- bis mittelbronzezeitlicher Kreisgraben mit Brand- und Erdbestattungen, sowie einer Anzahl domestischer

Ablagerungen, bzw. Ablagerungen die auf Festivitäten hinweisen

- Eine Grube, welche mit verbrannten Steinen und Holzkohle in Verbindung steht sowie einem bronzezeitlichen Wasserloch
- Ein Teil eines früh- bis mittelbronzezeitlichen Doppelgrabensystems, welches auf dem Grabhügel angelegt war
- Früheisenzeitliche Pflugspuren
- Eine früheisenzeitliche bis spätrömische Siedlung mit einem ungewöhnlich frühem Netzwerk von Koppeln oder Feldern, welche sich kontinuierlich von der mittleren Eisenzeit bis zum 2. Jhr. n. Chr. weiterentwickelten, einschließlich einer Anreihung weiterer Wasserlöcher
- Spuren einer frühsächsischen Siedlung mit zwei Brunnen, einer davon nutzte die Überreste eines hölzernen Kübels

Mount Farm liefert eine ungewöhnlich lange, zweitweise jedoch löchrige Abfolge von Besiedlungsspuren und Hinweise auf ein recht unbeachtetes Dasein im Hinterland von und um Dorchester, einem Gebiet, welches sich durch eine Reihe hochprofiliertes Siedlungskomplexe auszeichnet.

Translated by Markus Dylewski

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Plate 1 is reproduced by permission of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.