The Atlas of Hampshire's Archaeology

The Historic Environment Record (HER) contains around 50,000 entries that describe the known archaeology of Hampshire. Analysing the distributions of this complex data by using GIS allows fascinating insights into the evolution of the Hampshire landscape. The Atlas of Hampshire’s Archaeology presents HER data in a graphic and understandable way and provides the opportunity to enjoy and understand the archaeological story of Hampshire. Displaying the HER data alongside other information, such as topography, rivers, geology and landscape allows new insights and the patterns of data to be readily appreciated. The Atlas of Hampshire’s Archaeology was developed to support an understanding of the archaeological potential of different landscapes. The maps are equally interesting to a wider audience including those seeking to know what has been found in their area, students and academics undertaking research, and consultants preparing advice for developers. The following pages offer an opportunity to share the emerging story of Hampshire.

Mesolithic Hampshire
10,000 BC to 4,000 BC

The Mesolithic is characterised by small groups of nomadic hunter gatherers, who moved through the landscape hunting, fishing and gathering wild foods. They would have known their environment and the resources within it intimately and would have moved with the seasons, knowing where to find animals or following the migrating animals, and knowing where different foods were available throughout the year. This way of life leaves little trace in the archaeological record. The Mesolithic sites are frequently identified through the distinctive stone tools, which are generally small, and the small camps and occupation sites that these are associated with.

The distribution of these sites and finds sheds an interesting light on how the landscape of Hampshire might have been used at the time. There is a greater frequency of evidence in the margins around the Hampshire chalk landscape. These areas are to the south, woodland, heathland, coastal plain and coast. To the east they are the heaths and woods of the Whitehill Bordon area. These areas have numerous water sources and a great diversity of natural
resources. It is possible that the Whitehill Bordon area was rich in hazel and the sites may reflect the seasonal gathering of nuts. The coast would have provided a rich environment for fishing and seashore foods, however the present coast would not have been the coast line in the Mesolithic, and modern development across the coastal plain may have obscured the frequency and patterns of exploitation. Work in the Solent is finding underwater Mesolithic sites that were once coastal and which preserve extraordinary levels of organic material due to waterlogging. It seems likely that the chalk downland would be exploited for its resources, but the absence of evidence perhaps suggests expeditions from camps in the valleys out into the downs, meaning the archaeological evidence of the activities on the downs is harder to come by. A density of Mesolithic sites might yet emerge in the Test Valley from which the flanking downs were exploited.

Mesolithic maps
Map 1 and map 2 - These show the distribution of evidence from the Mesolithic, sites and finds, which shows a concentration of activity through the southern woodland, the central plain, river valleys and the East Hampshire heath. There is a notable spread between the River Wey, the River Loddon and the top of the River Test. There is a notable lack of evidence across the extensive, arid chalk downs.
Mesolithic archaeology against landscape type

Legend
- Occupation Sites
- Sites
- Findspots
- Rivers
- Chalk Scarp
- Coastal Plain Enclosed
- Coastal Plain Open
- Coastal Raised and Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Sea
- Downland Mosaic Large Scale
- Downland Mosaic Small Scale
- Estuary
- Greensand Hangers
- Greensand Hills
- Greensand Terrace
- Harbour Channels
- Intertidal Estuary and Harbour
- Lowland Mosaics Heath Associated
- Lowland Mosaics Medium Scale
- Lowland Mosaics Open
- Lowland Mosaics Small Scale
- Open Coastal Shore
- Open Downs
- Open Heath
- River Valley Floor
- River Valley Terrace
- Saltmarshes
- Wooded Downland Plateau
- Woodland and Plantation on Heath

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Map 3 and map 4 - The comparison between the distribution of Mesolithic and Neolithic evidence shows how the settled Neolithic landscape dominates the chalk downland, although Neolithic finds are also found across the landscapes where Mesolithic occupation had been evident.
Neolithic Hampshire
4,000 BC to 2,200 BC

The Neolithic is defined as the period when farming and farmed landscapes start to develop. Farming brings crops and fields, domesticated animals and paddocks. Woodland must be cleared to make way for fields and settlements develop as farmers stay with the resources they are nurturing. But hunting and gathering wild resources would also have been part of the working year. It is during the Neolithic that the first monuments appear in the landscape. Whilst there are a range of monuments, such as Henges, Cursus and Causewayed Enclosures, it is only Long Barrows that have been found in Hampshire.

Farming will have developed through time and the earliest farmed landscapes are likely to be those easiest to farm, with light fertile soils. Communities would have to invest heavily in a landscape to prepare it for farming and would wish to express ownership over the fields and the crops growing in them. That is ownership from neighbouring farmers and also perhaps from others in the landscape who continued to live as hunter gatherers. Long barrows, large communal burial mounds, are often prominently located within a landscape and it would seem they acted as territorial markers that tied communities to the landscape. Neolithic farms and occupation sites were slight and are archaeologically hard to find, particularly in landscapes where subsequently thousands of years of ploughing have eroded them. So few have been found that we cannot be sure of their true distribution. However long barrows are robust monuments that can be traced as earthworks and cropmarks and it seems reasonable to assume that the landscapes within which these burial mounds appear are the landscapes which were being farmed. Looking at the distribution map that shows these burial mounds in relation to landscape types we can see a close association between long barrows and open chalk downland. Settlement and pottery (a heavy fragile material more likely to be found on settlements and less likely to be carried by nomads) also reflect this distribution, although in addition it would appear that the river valleys were also important.

The distribution of axes and arrowheads, objects which are more portable and which might reflect hunting and gathering activities, are much less constrained to the chalk and suggest that whilst the farmed landscape might have been limited in its location and extent, Neolithic farmers utilised the whole landscape for the resources it contained. It is not hard to imagine them herding and hunting in the wild landscapes that existed around the farmed landscapes.
It is interesting to look at the distribution of Mesolithic and Neolithic evidence on a single map. (See maps 2 & 3 Mesolithic Hampshire) It can be seen that the landscapes dominated by Neolithic evidence and areas rich in Mesolithic evidence are almost mutually exclusive. The two ways of life utilised the Hampshire landscape in very different ways. None the less it is not hard to imagine these ways of life coming into conflict where farmers resisted having their animals or crops poached or where those living in the wilder landscape found their freedoms increasingly hemmed in by farmed land and in competition with farmers also exploiting the hunting grounds.

Neolithic maps
Map 1 & map 2 - The distribution of Neolithic long barrows shows a close association to 'open downland' character areas. It has light shallow soils associated with arable production, and it seems a reasonable assumption that farming and by extension settlement had its origins in this landscape. There is little evidence that can be classified as settlement or occupation from this period, but this sparse distribution can be enhanced if pottery finds are taken to infer settlement.
Maps 3, to 8 - Whilst the burial mounds and evidence of occupation are biased towards the chalk and the river valleys, the distribution of more portable artefacts indicate the exploitation of a much wider landscape. Axes, useful to harvest timber and fuel, and arrowheads, easily lost in the hunt show the settled farmers were also exploiting the wider resources of the wild landscape.
The Bronze Age is defined by the technological advance that sees metal work, specifically bronze, appearing in the archaeological record. However whilst it is a period of great cultural change the landscape evolution of Hampshire is in many regards a continuation of uses that have their roots in the Neolithic. Farming and the farmed landscape become firmly established within Hampshire and it is likely that any residual hunter gathering cultures have been displaced. But the extent to which Hampshire was a farmed landscape and the extent to which Hampshire remained a wild landscape subject to hunting and exploitation might be revealed within the distribution maps.

Early field systems which are discernable are only generally dated and might date from anytime between the Bronze Age and the Roman period. The Bronze Age origins of some field systems have been demonstrated by excavation, but excavation of field systems is rare, and so whilst a Bronze Age origin can be suggested the true extent of Bronze Age field systems is currently only speculation. However the distribution of the field systems which might date from anywhere between the Bronze Age and Roman periods does give a 'high water mark' within which the Bronze Age distribution must lie. This shows that only part of the landscape was farmed, and the distribution dominates the chalk land. Beyond the chalk land field systems are much less frequent. This might suggest the extent of the farmed and wild landscapes. Ranch boundaries are another manifestation of the organised farmed landscape and their distribution may help to define the extent of the organised landscape. Settlements and occupation are more likely to be found on the chalk, in the river valleys and on the coastal plain.
The distribution of burial mounds is much wider than either field systems or settlements, few of which have been traced. This distribution is not confined to the farmed landscape as burial mounds are also found within what evidence might suggest was still a wild landscape. Like long barrows it seems likely that burial mounds had a role in the farmed landscape to assert rights to the farmed land in which communities had invested. In the wild landscape the distribution of finds (as opposed to sites) suggests exploitation for activities without settlement such as hunting and grazing. Therefore it seems likely that the burial mounds in these areas assert the rights to exploit the area and resources, and do not specifically imply settlement, but imply enjoyment rights within the landscape. For example, it may be possible to discern utilisation of the New Forest heaths from the Avon Valley or the New Forest coastal plain.

The settlement appears to be peripheral to the forests and yet the forest is none the less rich in burial mounds. It is difficult to describe the archaeology of the wild areas, which were probably small camps and temporary structures. Burnt mounds are also found in these areas and might represent activities associated with transhumance or activity away from the ‘home’ settlements. Burnt mounds are large accumulations of burnt stone and ash. It is possible that in areas of seasonal exploitation, such as summer grazing lands, there was an association with rites of passage, sweat lodges or feasting, all of which have been offered as explanations of these features.

Bronze, the defining material of the age is made from copper alloyed with tin, both of which can be mined in Britain. Indeed the very productive mines of the southwest were almost certainly exporting large quantities of tin to Europe. Bronze was used for making tools (like axes, adzes and knives), for weapons (like spear heads, swords and arrowheads) and personal adornments (like bracelets). We find metal objects in a number of contexts. They are found as grave goods in burials. Some items appear to have been deliberately broken and disposed of, often into water. This may explain the large number of objects found in the River Thames. Bronze items are also found buried in hoards. Some hoards are full of new, unused and identically cast objects. Whilst 'ritual' is invoked as an explanation, it is possible that they are shedding light onto trade mechanisms of cross channel and inter-community trading. Other hoards are collections of old and broken items, and whilst again 'ritual' might be an explanation it is thought by many that these could be founders hoards and scrap metal collected for recycling. Evidence for a boat and cross channel trade was found at the Bronze Age jetty at Testwood Lakes and a bronze rapier was found in the mud amongst the pier posts.

**Bronze Age maps**
Maps 1 to map 4 - Archaeological evidence for Bronze Age settlement is limited and the distribution too weak to allow much confidence in it. Downland, river valley and coastal plain host settlement, but the distribution of burial mounds is much greater. The more universal distribution of burial mounds suggests it is a site type associated with landscape exploitation and not exclusively with settled and farmed exploitation. For example the burial mounds of the New Forest heath may have been valued and exploited by communities on the coastal plain and from the Avon Valley.
Map 5 and map 6 - The distribution of 'celtic' or late prehistoric field systems is not tightly dated and includes systems that have their origins in the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British periods. But they do give a 'high water mark' for the distribution of early field systems within which must sit unseen a more discreet distribution of Bronze Age field systems, and therefore this distribution does reinforce the proposition that Bronze Age burial mounds are used outside the settled and farmed landscapes.
The Iron Age is defined by the technological advance to iron production; however it is also a period of great cultural change. It is likely that the landscape was broadly utilised as it had been before and evolved as technological advance and population growth promoted an expansion in land farmed. The cultural context and content of that landscape sees changes that shed some light on Iron Age Hampshire.

One of the characteristic site types of this period is the hill fort. The role of the hill fort with the prominent locations and impressive defences has been subject to repeated revision, but it remains likely that at heart they were central places in the landscape. The highly visible defences, whether practical or for show, demonstrate power and hierarchy. Many are associated with communities living within the ramparts, and they may have acted as tribal centres, markets and epicentres of political power. The distribution of hill forts is illuminating. The greater density of this type of site lies within the farmed landscape, where no doubt the wealth and the population were found. The archaeological evidence associated with them includes field systems, enclosures, occupation sites and settlement. However they are also found within the areas that lie outside the farmed landscape, the landscape that was still exploited as a wild landscape. It is interesting to note that in the Bronze Age rights of exploitation of these areas were probably asserted by reference to the burial mounds, and to ancestral rights. Very few burial mounds are built in the Iron Age and it might be inferred that the landscape is now controlled by
political or military means, and that these are expressed through, or exerted through the hill forts. For example, in the New Forest an area with few settlements or field systems there is none the less a hill fort presence. There may also be a glimpse of the definition of the frontier between the farmed landscape and the landscape that is exploited in its wild state for grazing, timber / fuel and hunting. (It is possible that by the Iron Age the rights of hunting for a social elite might exert an influence on how this wild landscape is controlled, as it is interesting to note the extent of the wild areas in relation to later royal forests where landscape control was exerted through political / military power.) Banjo enclosures are a type of Iron Age enclosure whose name derives from their distinctive shape, a sack like enclosure associated with an approaching trackway. This trackway approach is usually splayed and is suggestive of stock control, by driving livestock into the splayed opening that funnels animals into an enclosure. Banjo enclosures can be found throughout the farmed landscape and reflect the archaeological evidence that the farmed landscape was a mixed economy of crops and livestock. The distribution of banjo enclosures shows a greater density at the interface between the implied farmed landscape and the implied wild landscape. It might be taken that the populations adjacent to the wild landscape would have a greater reliance or opportunity to run stock onto the grazing areas and would therefore have a greater amount of livestock than other communities. The increased number of banjo enclosures in a line along the interface between the two landscapes perhaps gives us a possible archaeological marker as to where this frontier is. We can have a little more confidence in the location of settlements and farms than for earlier periods as during the Iron Age there is an increased tendency for these to be defined by a ditched enclosure, which is archaeologically more distinct, through for example study of aerial photographs or during geophysical survey. It is also a period where many of the field systems have a demonstrable relationship with Iron Age features and so whilst field systems are often undated, an Iron Age date for many of them is not an unreasonable assumption. Whilst the distribution of field systems is a 'high water mark' that includes the Romano-British period it does help to define the areas of Hampshire that were farmed. The Iron Age enclosures may tell us something about the way in which political or military power operated, with more overt control through military power and status, and the possibility that communities sought to use their power to predate on neighbours stimulating a defensive characteristic to the settlements. However old the concepts of tribes are within the Hampshire landscape it might be possible to see in the Iron Age landscape the effects of tribalism in the archaeology. It is also interesting to note that archaeological evidence for textile production (spindle whorls and loom weights) and for processing grain (quern stones) have a marked distribution in the farmed and settled landscapes of the chalk and coastal plain.

**Iron Age maps**
Maps 1 to 6 - Iron Age settlement distribution can be more confidently identified, and is reasonably discreet to the chalk, coastal plain and river valleys. We might also presume it provides the limits to the preceeding Bronze Age settled landscape, allowing us to reflect back to the Bronze Age maps. The distribution of hill forts, like the Bronze Age barrows is not confined to the farmed and settled landscapes, which might enable us to recognise a transition from ancestral rights to political control of the landscape.
Map 7 & Map 8 - A significant component of the Iron Age landscape is a site known as a banjo enclosure. It takes its name from its distinctive shape, with splayed trackways approaching the enclosure. This arrangement is suggestive of stock control and it is interesting to note the increased density of distribution around the edges of the apparently settled landscape. This may reflect higher levels of stock in communities that have direct access to the grazing hinterland.
Maps 9 to 14 - Iron Age settlement and field systems demonstrate a settled and farmed landscape on the chalk and in the river valleys. Loom weights and spindle whorls reflect domestic textile production. The distribution of these artefacts falls within that settled chalk and river valley distribution. Likewise quern stones, reflecting the domestic processing of grain to flour also follow this pattern.
Iron Age archaeology against topography

Legend
- Oppidum
- Hillfort
- Settlement
- Farmsteads
- Occupation Site
- Loomweight
- Spindle whorl
- Field Systems

Interior of a reconstructed round house with loom, Butser Ancient Farm

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Continental influences, essentially Roman influences can be seen in Iron Age Hampshire, in politics, the origins of urbanism and material culture, such as pottery and amphora that contained wine and oil. In Hampshire the Atrebatic King Verica had a particularly close association with Rome and the impact of the Roman invasions of 43 AD is uncertain and probably benign. It is noticeable that the area was subject to a client king, in other words the tribal hierarchy survived the initial invasion.

Roman culture is relatively recognisable within the archaeological record and as a result some of the distributions are more reliable. It is possible to discern a hierarchy of settlement across the landscape. Winchester and Silchester were civitas centres, towns from which civil areas were administered. They evolved from the Iron Age oppida, and their position at hubs on the Roman road network emphasises their central role. Evidence to suggest small towns have been located at the crossroads of Roman roads at East Anton and at Neatham. However the evidence of the road network alone suggests further towns might emerge at Havant and Wickham. Bitterne on the River Itchen at Southampton is putatively an important port. The Solent, the Portus Magnus, would have been a haven and it is interesting to note that significant Roman sites have been found at the head of the tidal navigations on a number of rivers and harbours. Nursling, Bitterne, Fairthorne, Stone Point and Portchester. It is likely that trade along the coast was able to seep into southern Hampshire through any number of landing places, although Bitterne is possibly the key port of the period. It is probable that salt was made and traded inland.

The distribution of Roman settlement is not uniform across Hampshire and the variations and the patterns offer some insight into landscape evolution. The distribution of Roman villas has a tendency to be 'marginal'. This is noticeable in a number of ways. There is a distribution of villas north of Andover which are marginal to the open downland that dominated the settlement patterns of the prehistoric. There is a distribution of Roman villas along the road from Winchester to Silchester. Whilst this might be a function of the road, it coincides with the line of banjo enclosures, which may represent the frontier
between farmed and wild landscapes in the Iron Age. Perhaps these villas likewise are on the margin. Along the south the villas sit on the margins of the down and forest heath belt that lies above the coastal plain. Reviewing the distribution of Roman and Iron Age settled landscape we can see that the Roman villas tend to be marginal to the densest areas of Iron Age activity. Perhaps this reflects villa estates established on land beyond the Iron Age heartland.

Other patterns can be discerned. East of Alton is an area of settlement and villas that is both dense and unexplained. Perhaps this represents wealth derived from the Roman potteries at Alice Holt, or possibly given the location on the road out of London these represent hunting estates of East Hampshire close to the road to London, close to Neatham.

Roman wealth from an urban elite enabled landed estates to be developed outside the farmed landscape (much as parks and gardens do from the 16th century onwards). There are other locations within the wooded areas where field systems and settlement is sparse, which perhaps suggests hunting estates. It is interesting to note that the areas which emerge as medieval forests with royal hunting lodges also have villas embedded within them, and perhaps we can see the origins of the hunting landscapes. Study of the material culture of these villas might shed light on this.

Running north from Havant is a line of Roman settlement including villas. This sits in a fold in the landscape that appears to be a long lived route currently occupied by the A3 corridor. It seems likely that there is a missing Roman road route through this landscape. There is a notable density of Roman settlement in the Avon Valley north of Fordingbridge. Lastly when looking at the distribution of Iron Age and Roman settlement Basingstoke is rich in both periods, and it seems likely that the Roman road from Winchester to Silchester, which is not a straight line, is in fact a road from Winchester to Basingstoke which then goes on to Silchester hence the dog leg in the route. It is possible that Vindomis lies in the Basingstoke area.

It is also worth noting that some woodland and heathland areas are associated with quasi-industrial rural landscapes, particularly the pottery kilns, which are quite visible, but probably also iron working and charcoal production.

**Roman maps**

Map 1 and map 2 and map 5 and map 6 - When the Iron Age and Roman landscapes are superimposed it is evident that the Roman landscape is less constrained compared with the Iron Age. This probably reflects a range of influences. The expansion of the farmed landscape into areas previously marginal. Industrial scale exploitation of resources previously informally exploited (e.g. pottery kilns). Urban wealth or diverse estate holdings allowing significant occupation sites (such as villas) within less productive landscapes, in turn perhaps representing country or hunting estates.
Map 3 and map 4 and map 7 and map 8 - Roman villas are defined by their evidently elevated status reflected by baths and mosaic floors etc. The distribution has an interestingly 'marginal' character to it such as the villas in the North West, the villas around Alton, the villas on the margins of the woodland and the villas in sometimes deep and isolated unsettled landscapes. This may reflect expansion of the farmed landscape with new Roman estates. In places it may also reflect hunting and country estates that draw the wealth from further afield than their immediate surroundings.