



Chichester and District Archaeology Society
Graffham Common Topographical Survey



November 2012

Background

The Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) has recently purchased two parcels of land on Graffham Common, an area at the top of a ridge on the Sussex Downs. The land is mostly on the north-facing slope of the downs, and is bounded by an ancient boundary bank and ditch on its southern side. The parcel of land to the south is owned by David Ross and his wife.

The SWT's aim is to return their land to an upland heathland habitat, by encouraging the return of heathers, selective culling of the conifers, and removal of rhododendrons and ferns. This process has started, but is far from complete. The land is within the area of the South Downs National Park.

A number of tumuli have been identified along the ridge at the southern edge of this scheduled site. In addition there are a number of other pits and mounds which are thought to relate to various periods, including the occupation of this area by the Canadian Army prior to the D Day landings. Some of these features have never been recorded, and others have not been recorded accurately.

SWT asked the Chichester and District Archaeology Society (CDAS) to conduct a topographical survey of the features on their land, so that a permanent record is compiled as the woodland is cleared. David Ross has agreed that the survey should also cover the tumuli on his land.

Figure1. Ordnance Survey Map of Graffham Common



Scope of this Report

This is an interim report that covers the first phase of the survey during week commencing 26th November 2012. Although originally planned for the first three days of this week, in fact the survey did not start until midday on Monday because of a forecast period of heavy rain which subsequently cleared.

Methodology

The team were briefed on the objectives of the survey and the potential hazards of the site using the risk assessment in Appendix 2.

The first surveying step was to establish reproducible base line. The western end of the bank and ditch appeared to be broadly in a straight line, and so a base line was laid out alongside this feature. Semi-permanent pegs were used to mark the line at convenient points 30 to 50 metres apart. The bank and ditch were surveyed in relative to this line. This bank and ditch is the boundary between the SWT land and David Ross' land.

The first phase of the survey extended from the westerly end of the bank and ditch where its location was confused by the access to Graffham Common from the adjoining road to the new conifer plantation to the east. It may be difficult to survey the bank and ditch through this plantation, and so the position of the bank and ditch on the east side of the plantation will have to be surveyed relative to the work that has already been carried out.

The profile of the bank and ditch were recorded at ten metre intervals.

The location and the distance apart of these semi-permanent markers will be established at some future date using accurate GPS equipment borrowed from Archaeology South East, Chichester District Council, or Southampton University.

The tumuli and pits were surveyed by;

- Recording their size.
- Plotting the profile in two dimensions – approximately east west and north south, determined by using a hand bearing compass.
- Each feature was surveyed in relative to the two of the semi-permanent pegs on the base line.

The survey data was recorded on site. The plan drawings were prepared on A3 sheets of Permatrace, partially on site and partially after the survey, initially in pencil from on a scale of 1:200. Subsequently, the drawings were traced in ink onto sheets of Permatrace, with marks showing where each drawing married up with the one next to it. The individual drawings were scanned in to a computer, and the whole drawing joined together using the Photoshop Elements 11 software.

There are additional features at the base of the ridge to the north – most notably a series of banks and ditches in the North West corner of the site. These will be surveyed as a second priority. These will be surveyed in a separate exercise, and the key points separately fixed using an accurate GPS.

Equipment

- Electronic Theodolite was used to layout the base line. This equipment was previously purchased by CDAS as the result of a generous grant from the Chichester Harbour Conservancy.

- Dumpy levels were used to survey the profiles of the bank and ditch, the tumuli and the pits. One was owned by CDAS, and an additional unit was hired for this survey.
- Distance measuring was done using tapes.

Participation Volunteer & Training

CDAS spent 3 days surveying at Graffham Common. Eleven members were involved providing 21 man days of resource – see appendix 1.

Survey Results

Bank and Ditch.

The diagram shows that the ditch was carefully constructed. The ditch is to the north of the feature. It runs absolutely straight for considerable sections. For the most part the profile of the bank and ditch are clearly discernible. There are sections where the ditch has disappeared, but the bank remains. There reasons for this are unclear. This bank and ditch forms the boundary between two landholdings today, and there is every reason to believe that it was originally constructed for this purpose.

A trackway joins from the north at the point where the bank and ditch change direction. This trackway is bounded on both sides by a bank and ditch until it disappears over the brow of the hill. Two questions come to mind:

1. Are banks and ditches associated with the trackway contemporaneous with the boundary bank and ditch?
2. Is the trackway some form of drove road, and does the area represent some form of tax or toll gathering facility?

Barrows.

All the barrows were of a similar size – between 15m and 18m in diameter. The height was up to two metres. This looks fairly insignificant in the drawings in Appendix 3 when compared to their diameter. However, on site their height is sufficient to create a significant impact.

All four barrows surveyed show signs of an excavation at the highest point. The depressions so created have been included on the survey. Our assumption is that these excavations were probably done long ago. However there is the possibility that the Canadian Army dug them during training to provide vantage points.

Quarries.

The two large pits surveyed have been interpreted as quarries, because there are signs of an entry point through which the extracted material could be removed. There is a widened working area. No attempt was made to excavate the floor of these quarries to determine the actual floor.

The largest quarry was 25m from entry to presumed work face, whereas the smaller quarry was only 16m front entry to work face..

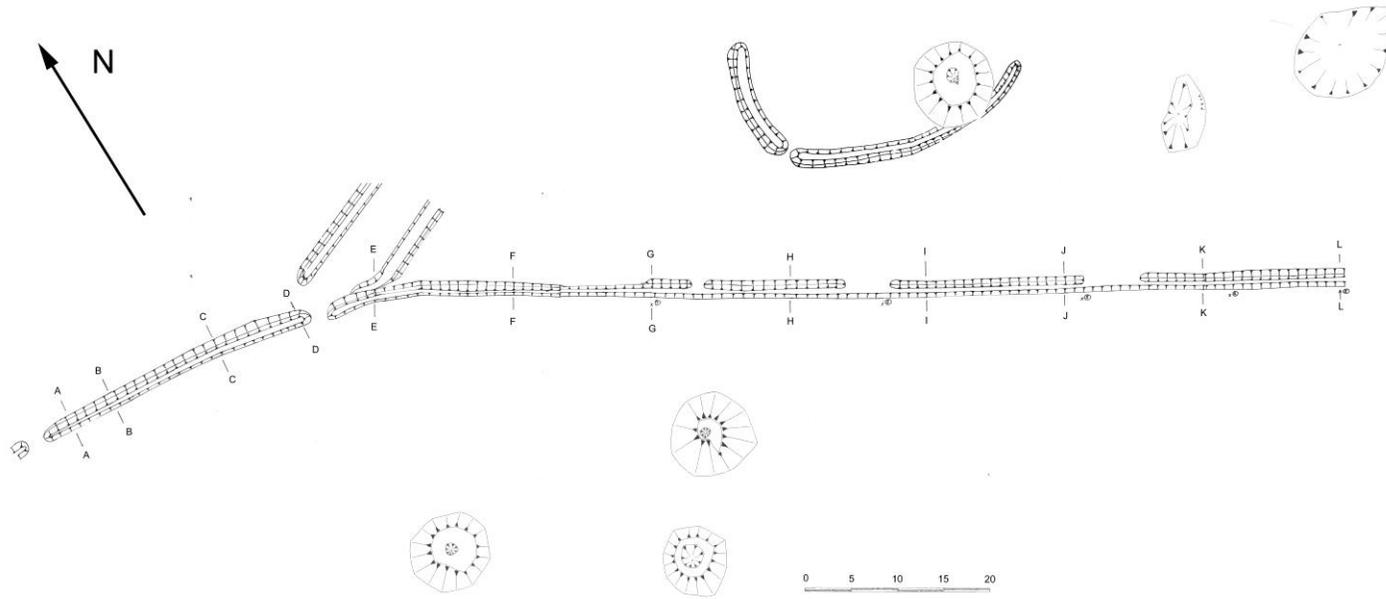
The shape and the entry point are the two key diagnostic features of these quarries. Although none have been surveyed in this first phase, the pits that are presumed to have been dug by the Canadian Army during WW11 are different. They are more regularly rectangular, and have a wider entry point.

Curved Bank and Ditch

This bank and ditch appears to run underneath barrow 3, which indicates that it would pre-date it. There is no evidence that the curve was completed to the north.

Its function is not understood at this stage. In this case the ditch is to the south of the feature – that is on the outside of the curve.

Graffham Common Survey
Boundary bank and ditch, barrows and quarries - Western section
Surveyed 26 - 28 November 2012



Next Steps

The survey team will return to the site and continue the survey in a south easterly direction. The second phase of this survey will be carried out during week commencing 25th March 2013.

Arrangements need to be made to take accurate GPS location readings for key markers so that the drawings can be accurately and reproducibly positioned in maps of the area.

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CDAS Survey Team Leader

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Bibliography