

The fact that the Old Down examples survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century before they were ploughed down in just a few generations suggests that this area was not ploughed prior to this. This was probably chalk down land for the great a majority of time.

The burial mound will have been thrown up using material excavated from an outer quarry ditch. It would be usual for this to be over a central burial, which could be inhumation or cremation. When the barrow was opened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was reported that it contained nothing but black ash. A small fragment of Bronze Age pottery found on the surface when the field was last ploughed suggests there may have been a cremation urn, or possibly grave goods. An archaeological excavation of a burial mound at Buckskin before the houses were built found a complex process had been used to prepare the site, including evidence of a feast. We cannot entirely know what rituals took place here, but this was an important site for the local community.

It is perhaps not surprising that the mound is located on a site with such an unexpectedly good panoramic view. In laying claim on the landscape, or in celebrating the life or lives of those buried in it, such a prominent location is attractive. Perched on the skyline above Basingstoke it would have been a notable feature. And from the site the farms and fields for miles around would have been visible. If you look north west, White Barrow can still be seen today, a round clump of trees in the field beyond the Battledown flyover. There was a barrow

cemetery of about 6 burial mounds in the fields at Battledown, and a burial mound would have been visible on the sky line of Scraggs Hill. There was a complex barrow cemetery just beyond Down Grange at Brackley Way, and of course the Buckskin Barrows. Although we can't be sure where the farms were, the little clusters of houses and paddocks, the rising smoke and the paths and tracks would have drawn the eye to them when contemplating this view in the Bronze Age.

The burial mound on the skyline would also have been a handy reference point for subsequent generations when laying out the landscape and it is probably not coincidence that the burial mound sits in the corner of the field. It is on the ridge where the A30 progresses south, and at its back is the municipal boundary marked by a line of trees and an incised path. Both of these may have used the burial mound as a reference point.

So when you next walk across the top of Old Down, stop at the ring of trees and contemplate the bustling town of Basingstoke, contemplate too a more ancient landscape one little glimpse of which you are standing on.

## Get Involved?

*If you would like more information then please contact: [odandbwd@googlemail.com](mailto:odandbwd@googlemail.com) or visit our website <http://old-down.org.uk>*

## Where is Old Down?

Old Down is beside the A30 west of Basingstoke 1 mile from Junction 7 of the M3. Access is via Old Down Hall at the top of Kempshott Lane.



# The Old Down Bronze Age Tumulus

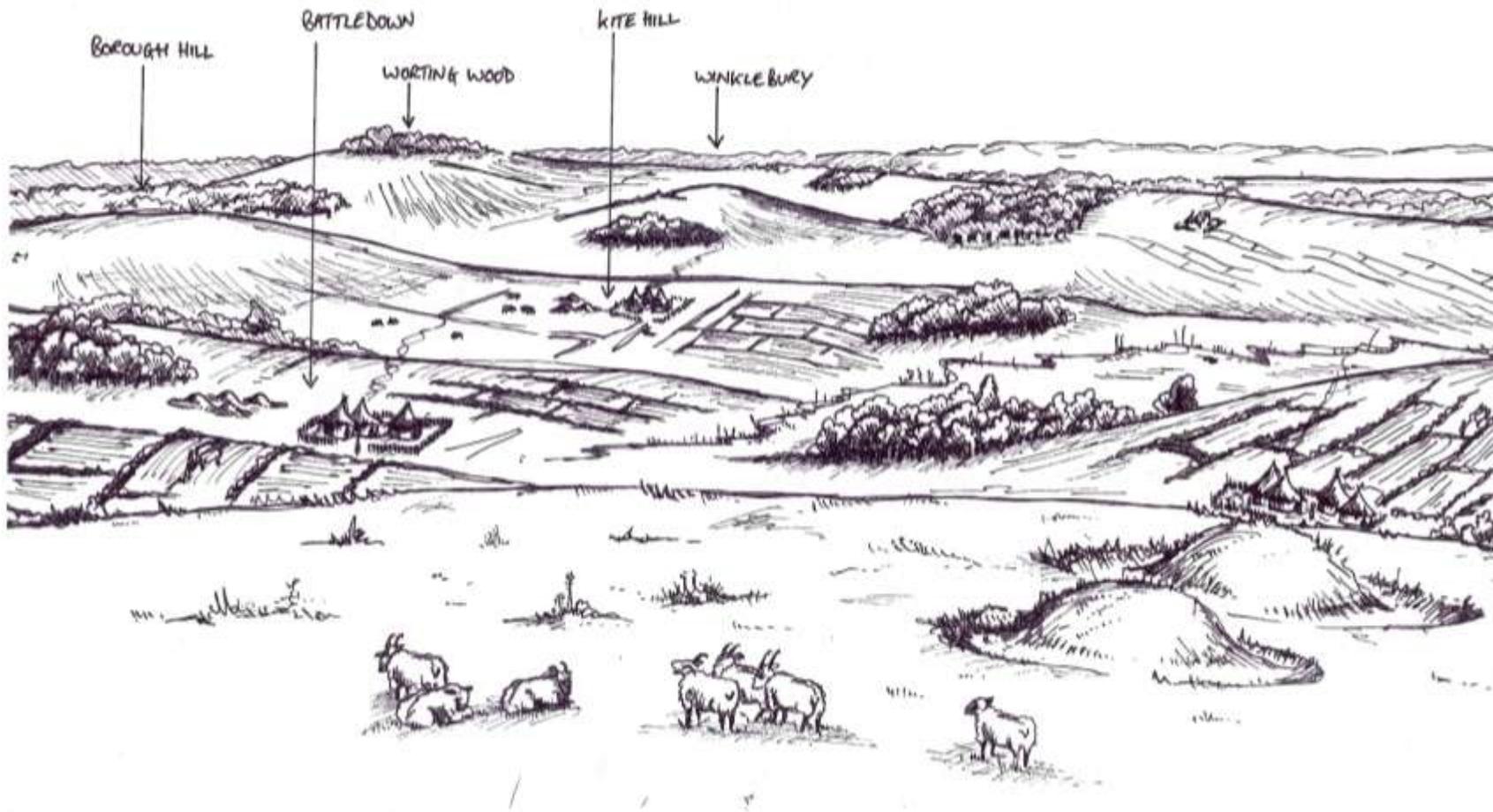
By  
*David Hopkins, County Archaeologist,  
Hampshire County Council*



Old Down Tumulus from the air.



# Visualisation of the View from Old Down c2000 BC



*Archaeological evidence from nearby site show sheep and goats grazed the downland. The fields, settlements and burial mounds of the Bronze Age would have been spread across the landscape overlooked by Old Down as visualised here.*

## Old Down Bronze Age Tumulus

In the top corner of the Old Down site along side the A30 is a circular bank. In the centre is a very slight swelling, all that remains of a Bronze Age burial mound or barrow. The bank and trees keep the memory of this location alive. In fact, almost imperceptibly, nearby there was also another burial mound. These burial mounds tell a number of stories.

The first is about the people who lived here between 3,000 and 4,000 years ago. Although little direct evidence of Bronze Age settlement has been found we know from artefacts, burials and burial mounds that Basingstoke was a settled and farmed landscape. Some unenclosed settlements of post built round houses, which would have had conical thatched roofs, were recently found when Popley was expanded northwards.

Artefacts collected by George Willis, after whom the town's museum is named, suggest quite a number of these sites existed. These were people probably more tied to a place by their use of the land than ever before. We believe that burial mounds were part of the way in which they laid claim to land, or perhaps to rights to use land. The burial mounds of the ancestors justifying a right of continued use.