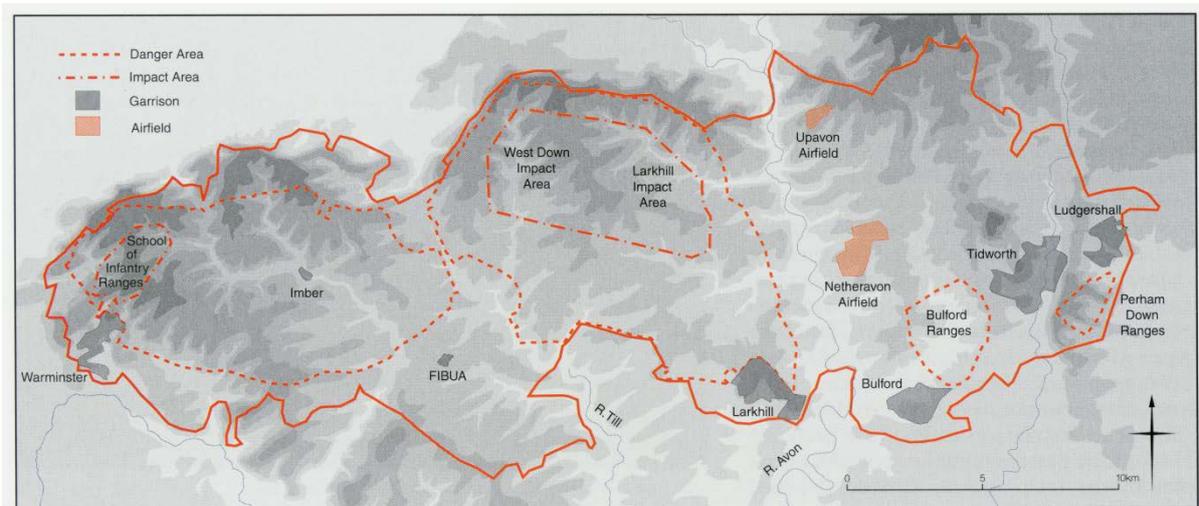
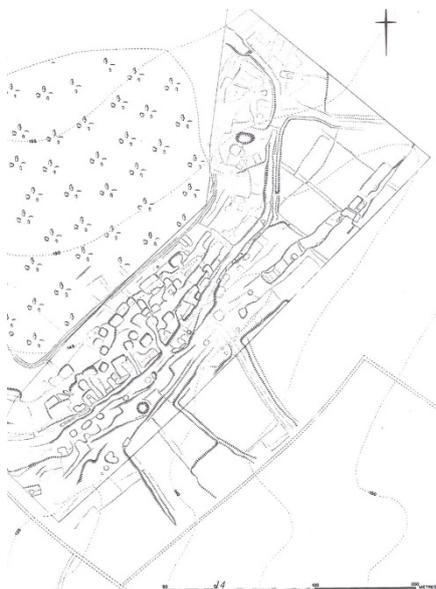


Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA), Wiltshire: archaeology and history (Notes for visitors, prepared by the Royal Archaeological Institute, 2017)

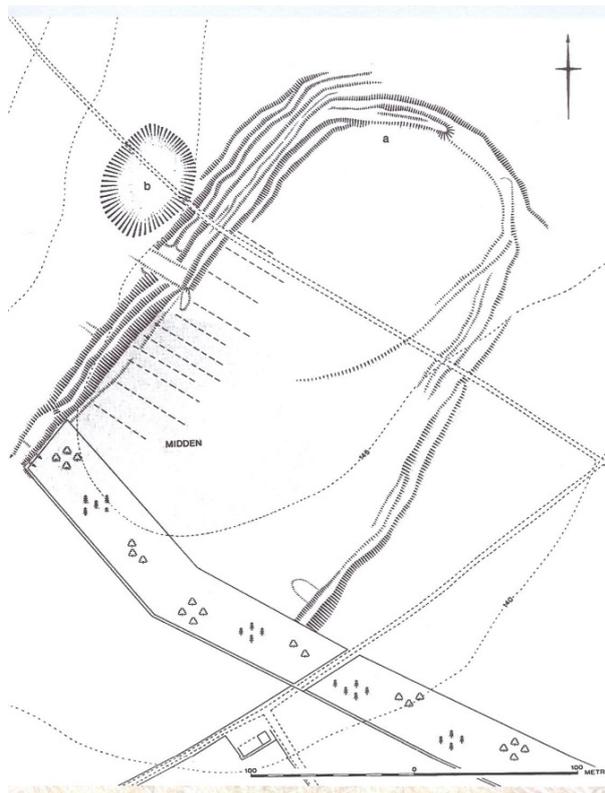
A large swathe of the Wiltshire Downs has been taken over by the army since the end of the nineteenth century. Much of the landscape has therefore not been subject to intensive modern ploughing, and the preservation of archaeological remains has depended on the army and its willingness not to use Bronze Age barrows as targets. The SPTA is now managed so as to do as little damage as possible. Public highways run through the SPTA, but access to the ranges and impact areas is restricted; by-ways may be walked, but not strayed from to view a monument more closely (see Ministry of Defence web-site for availability). Detailed surveys were done for English Heritage in the 1990s (McOmish, Field and Graham 2002; map, p. 4).



Going south-west from Everleigh is a minor road which gives some idea of the training area landscape. It passes the Snail Down barrow cemetery, excavated in the early 1960s (Thomas 2005). Examples are given of two sites that may be viewed by walkers, but only from a short distance.



Chisenbury Warren is a long linear Romano-British village, with Iron Age origins, sheltered in a dry valley. Small house-plots line the street, but there were clearly several phases. Occupation seems from an excavated sunken-featured building and pottery to have continued into the fifth or sixth centuries; whether abandonment resulted from economic and agricultural change, population reduction, climate or cultural and political pressure remains uncertain, but the long history argues against an overall picture of sudden late Roman/early post-Roman decline and settlement shift (plan from McOmish, Field and Brown 2002, 100).



Nearby is East Chisenbury midden, a mound still almost 3 metres high, and late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, which overlies an enclosure, with a large hollow alongside. Such midden sites with quantities of animal bone, mostly sheep, and pottery have only recently been recognized; another Wiltshire example has been excavated at Potterne. Dung seems to have been piled up rather than spread on fields; some special purpose is also hinted at by fragments of human skull, found in small-scale excavations. The mound was built on a spur, and would have been very visible, but is much later than Silbury Hill and the Marlborough mound (see on-line entries) (plan from McOmish, Field and Brown 2002, 60; full report, McOmish, Field and Brown 2010).

References and further reading

McOMISH, D., FIELD, D. AND BROWN, G. 2002. *The Field Archaeology of the Salisbury Plain Training Area*, Swindon: English Heritage

McOMISH, D., FIELD, D. AND BROWN, G. 2010. The late Bronze Age and early Iron Age midden site at East Chisenbury, Wiltshire, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 103, 35-101

THOMAS, N. 2005. *Snail Down, Wiltshire: the Bronze Age Barrow Cemetery*, Devizes: Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Monograph 3

These notes were originally prepared for the annual summer meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute held in July 2016; see www.royalarchinst.org for further information. RAI members have access to the printed Report which contains syntheses of the significance of recent research to archaeological understanding of the county. The notes were prepared by David A. Hinton; the Institute is grateful to David Field for taking members round the two sites described. Other on-line entries can be accessed through the RAI web-site.