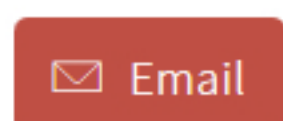


Lambourn Downs National Mapping Programme project



This project covers 600 square kilometres of chalk downland known as the Lambourn Downs and a strip of the Vale of the White Horse. The survey resulted in a 42% increase in the number of known sites, mostly lynchet banks, medieval ridge and furrow and late prehistoric or Roman field systems, Bronze Age round barrows and a considerable number of previously unrecorded prehistoric enclosures.



The Iron Age hillfort at Uffington photographed on 08- OCT-1993. Uffington is one of a string of hillforts located along the northern edge of the Downs. The Uffington White Horse can just be seen at the left hand edge of the image above the scarp (NMR 15073/19). © Crown copyright. HE

The diverse archaeology of the Lambourn Downs

There is evidence of a rich history of both agricultural activity and settlement remains from later prehistory through to the post-medieval periods on the Lambourn Downs. Much of the upland area was intensively cultivated during the Romano-British period, and extensive co-axial field systems have been recorded in the higher regions.

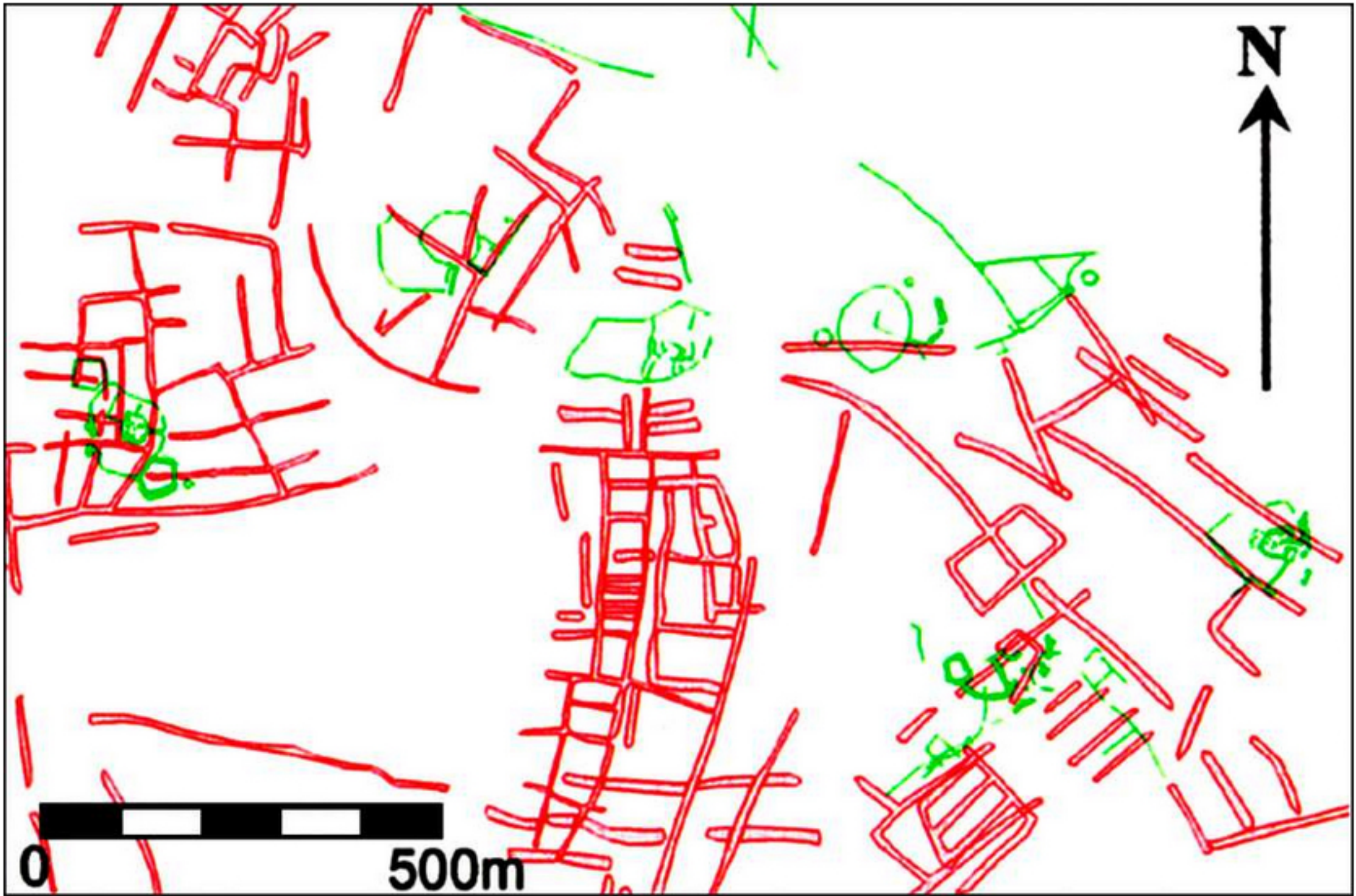
Field systems fell out of use, remaining largely uncultivated grassland until the 20th century. Though showing signs of plough damage, many were recorded as substantial earthworks on RAF photographs taken between 1939 and 1946. Continued deep ploughing and creation of larger fields has reduced many field systems to isolated fragments of bank and lynchet visible only as subtle earthworks and soilmarks on aerial photographs. Effectively, in just over half a century, virtually all traces of these field systems have been obliterated.



Traces of ploughed out fields on the Lambourn Downs photographed on 07-APR-1997. The banks defining the fields are visible as paler lines, reflecting the greater concentration of chalk subsoil showing through the crop that is just beginning to germinate. (NMR 15613/08). © Crown copyright. HE

Later prehistoric sites: settlements and ‘banjo’ enclosures

The survey recorded a number of examples of both enclosed and unenclosed prehistoric settlements, mostly dating to the Iron Age. One such settlement discovered on the clay vale appears very similar to the Iron Age settlement of Claydon Pike. Also recorded were 12 cropmark examples of mid-late Iron Age ‘banjo’ enclosures, all located in close proximity to one another in the central zone of the Lambourn Downs. The function of these sites is still not entirely clear, though excavated examples have revealed evidence of settlement activity.



This section of an NMP plot shows a number of closely spaced banjo enclosures near Winterdown Bottom. The banjo enclosures appear in green. The red features represent the banks of the Romano-British field systems that overlie the enclosures. Over time ploughing is removing all traces of the fields and reaching down to the enclosures, which will themselves be destroyed as ploughing progresses. © Historic England