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‘Broad Down, Devon: Archaeological and other stories’

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Biography:

David Harvey is an Associate Professor in Historical Cultural Geography at the University of Exeter. He has published widely on histories of heritage and heritage theory, as well as having a British Academy funded project on the construction of knowledge at ancient monuments. He has also substantial research grants for research projects on ‘oral histories and landscape archaeology’ (AHRC), ‘Methodist communities in nineteenth century Cornwall’ (Leverhulme Trust), on ‘regional identities and arts practice’ (AHRC) and on ‘technological innovation and farming during the post-war period’ (ESRC).

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‘Broad Down, Devon: Archaeological and other stories’

Abstract:

This paper explores the knowledge construction process of an archaeological site in East Devon (UK). Bouncing off an oral historical account of the site that seems to run against scientific truth claims, the paper investigates the story of how knowledge of the site has developed over the last two centuries. Building on previous work that explores the history and practice of archaeology, the paper opens up questions of what counts as evidence. Then, taking a cue from more recent work that suggests a more dynamic and open-ended engagement with the landscape, the paper turns to examine how the meaning of a site can be made and remade. As part of this endeavour, questions of *what* as well as *who* can ‘speak’ are examined and some space is opened up for the agency of ‘minor figures’, both human and non-human.

Key Words:

Archaeological knowledge; relational identities; oral history; minor figures; Devon, South West England;

Introduction

Broad Down, in East Devon (see figure 1), has been described as a “well preserved prehistoric ritual landscape of a nature unparalleled elsewhere in Devon, and of national archaeological significance” (Simpson and Noble 1993: 2). Simpson and Noble’s (1993) survey and management plan noted the existence of 55 identified barrows and two enclosures, probably of Bronze Age (c. 1800-800BC) date, with 41 of the sites now scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended).¹ Espousing the ‘universal’ values that are ingrained in the categorization of the monuments as ‘of national importance’, the survey set out an extensive conservation plan, detailing arrangements, procedures and schemes for public access, interpretation, land management and conservation and planners were charged with ensuring that the physical integrity of the site would not be diminished.² In many ways, this system of prescribed management, interpretation and landscape governance forms a sort of ‘countryside curatorship’ (Edmonds 2006: 170). Broad Down, as a set of objects and meanings, is stabilised and fitted in to a system that renders it ‘legible’ and “so available for scholarship and instruction” (DeSilvey 2007: 880). As part of a broader trend in archaeology that searches for more open-ended and polyvocal accounts (e.g. Hicks and Beaudry 2006; Bender et al 2007; David and Thomas 2008), this paper seeks to break down the apparent hegemony of meaning and linear meta-narrative of Broad Down; a task that was prompted by a visit to a local farmer to conduct an oral history interview:³

They tell me we’ve got burial mounds.... We drove the cow and calf up to the top here, and the lorry backed up against one of these tumuli or burial grounds, and we drove the cow up. Got no ramp on the back, you see

FIGURE 1 NEAR HERE
LOCATION MAP
(Including an inset map of Britain)

FIGURE 2 NEAR HERE
PICTURE OF BURIAL MOUND/CATTLE RAMP

The use of a Bronze Age burial mound as a cattle ramp seems to have remained off the official interpretation for this site – indeed, its use as such appears to be positively destructive in terms of the conservation of the feature. Its interpretation as a ‘cattle ramp’, however, has undoubtedly affected the feature’s form and may have even secured its physical integrity. For the farmer, the mound’s value was not connected to its archaeological significance. Although not scientifically ‘correct’, the farmer’s interpretation reminds us of the importance of appreciating ‘hidden’, and alternative meanings of landscape that are a dynamic and contradictory part of everyday life (Harvey and Riley 2005: 25).⁴ There is a sense of irony that the farmer’s use of the burial mound for loading cattle, meant that the landscape features were ‘preserved’ and left in a state that warranted such protection. It could be argued, therefore, that protection through the official scheduling process *do not*

¹ See, for example, ‘Round Barrow Cemetery on Broad Down’, SM29634 on the Historic Environment Record (HER).

² These ‘Universal values’ are best seen through the categorization of UNESCO ‘World Heritage’ sites, with sites that are deemed to be of ‘national importance’ in many ways seen, perhaps, as ‘junior members’ of this club. See, for instance, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/> (accessed 23/11/09).

³ See Figure 2.

⁴ See also Jones (2003) and Bender (2001).

protect an ancient site at all, but a modern landscape feature – recently used as a cattle ramp – that has been reified to stand metaphorically for an *ancient site* for cultural reasons, which can only be understood within a contemporary heritage management context. This echoes Piccini and Holtorf's (2009: 14) sentiments of archaeology reflecting the 'composition of the present', being contingent upon its social context (see also Shanks and Tilley 1992). This contingency is not new, and needs to be historicised, drawing on the increasing strength of work that produces more reflexive, interdisciplinary and unfinalised accounts of archaeology's dynamic engagement with the world that is far from inert (see Shanks 1992; Tilley 1994; Bender et al 2007). The meta-narrative of linear progress is "only one way of presenting the story, one point of access, which might benefit from being set against others" (Edmonds 2006: 172).

Following a discussion of how space can be made for other stories, the paper turns to the narratives of Broad Down, The construction of a scientific narrative of this 'ritual landscape of national archaeological importance' is examined, following similar work on the histories of archaeology (e.g. Trigger 1989; Holtorf 2000-2005; Harvey 2003; Sweet 2004; Stout 2008). The paper then turns to alternative narratives – the small stories and 'minor figures' (Lorimer 2003) – which standard narratives tend to elide, but which are wholly ingrained within these narratives.

Making Space

With the history of archaeology, we should heed Rosemary Sweet's (2004) caution against prescribing a teleological 'view from hindsight' that portrays earlier archaeologists as knowing agents in the progression of the discipline towards an inevitable end. In practice, this operation has led archaeologists both to broaden their view, and also to make this view purposely more messy. On the one hand, therefore, a more interdisciplinary perspective has increased the range of methods and theoretical positions that can be brought to bear on the analysis of their material (for instance, see Hicks and Beaudry 2006; David and Thomas 2008; Hicks and Beaudry 2010 in press). On the other hand, recent work in archaeology has also sought to break up the clean lines of some past endeavours, bringing an imaginative and reflexive frame of mind to problematise easy finalities with a wilful hesitancy and sense of disruption (for instance, see Tilley 1994; Bender 1998, Bender and Winer 2001; Pearson and Shanks 2001). In making space for some 'other stories' however, we should allow the space for other story-tellers; for non-academic voices, for travelling objects, the ephemeral, non-durable and prosaic. After all, as Penrose (2007: 9) notes with respect to the transience of the modern landscape, "a thing's passing is sometimes its contribution". The example of the farmer and the cattle ramp is slightly banal, but reflects the fact that, ultimately, each and every person who visits Broad Down brings their own interpretation and meaning to the site (Tilley 1994: 11). Drawing from Karen Till's work (2005: 215), it is "the visitors who assess, create and validate the authenticity of places of memory". Although these non-academic voices may seem tangential, it is the 'real' material and connotative consequences that these voices have that make them worthy of consideration.

As we shall see, the use of the burial mound as a cattle ramp may well have helped to preserve its physical integrity. Thus, an exploration of the process of *how* a mound in a field became a 'Bronze-Age burial mound' includes the banal, the anecdotal, accidental, non-academic and even the non-human. Following Edensor (2005a: 311), one could argue that the burial mound/cattle ramp has 'imposed its materiality upon the sensory experience' of the farmer, leading him to see a use as a 'cattle ramp', which was at odds with the official interpretation of the mound. This reflects Bender's (2001) assertion that we need to make room for how people engage with landscapes and their material worlds in dynamic and often contradictory ways; a case of where

material culture is not passive and reflective, “but can act back upon us in unexpected ways” (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 5). In other words, it was perhaps the material form of the mound itself – together with the presence of a lorry that had no hydraulic ramp – that seemed to have agency in its use as a cattle ramp. The very ‘physicality’ of the landscape, therefore, would seem to act as a “foundation for thought and social interaction” (Tilley 2008: 272).⁵

Recent interest in the non-human has hitherto mostly been channelled through bio-philosophy (e.g. Whatmore 1999). Although most of this work has been contemporary in outlook, this paper follows other scholars in its attempt to historicize this relationship and make space for the non-human as a ‘co-constituent of our past’ (Griffin 2008: 95. See also Featherstone 2007). In his work on tracing other stories in industrial ruins, (2005a, 2005b) Edensor echoes Till (2005) by invoking the idea of *haunting* – that the ‘absent presences’ of other stories and other possibilities are marked by ‘ghosts’. Buchli and Lucas (2001: 11-12) note how an idea of haunting – of the ‘uncanny’ – is necessarily very close to the archaeological imagination, with its focus on the material, the non-discursive and un-constituted. A commitment to scientific explanation, however, has often resulted in these non-discursive experiences being crowded out. This paper can never make the non-discursive and un-constituted fully ‘known’, despite the popular rhetorical devices that we can make stones and archives ‘speak’ (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 12).⁶ Through reference to the non-discursive and inarticulate, however, we can make space for the overlooked and taken-for-granted experiences and practices of others. Undertaking this exercise within a historical context is problematic. However, as Griffin (2008: 95-6) shows, casting our eyes over the archive in imaginative ways, rather than mechanistically trawling for ‘evidence’, can help in our efforts to make room for the unwritten and the unsaid.

Making space for other voices within the context of archaeological practice has been pioneered by Tilley (1994), Bender (1998) and others. Drawing from Edmonds (2006: 186), however, we must neither simply compile vignettes of other voices that ‘add local colour’, nor reject outright the practices and processes of ‘officially sanctioned’ archaeological interpretation and management. This sentiment echoes the work of Michael Shanks (1992: 3), who sought to reclaim sensuousness without developing a vendetta against scientific archaeology.⁷ For Edmonds (2006), reflection on archaeological practice led him to become more interested in oral testimony as a means to yield a more nuanced understanding of the landscape. For me, on the other hand, an oral history interview in which a farmer talked about using a burial mound as a cattle ramp, prompted me, not to excavate the site itself, but to excavate the archaeological narratives that have been produced in connection to the site.⁸

⁵ For a discussion of materiality and the agency of materials, see Ingold (2007) and associated discussion articles in the same volume.

⁶ For instance, despite their very different contexts, both Thomas (1994) and Garrow and Shove (2007: 126) celebrate the traditional maxim that archaeology somehow can make a ‘mute stone speak’.

⁷ As a cautionary note, however, see Wilmore’s (2007; 250-52) observation of how a split may develop between the (officially sanctioned) ‘scientific excavators’, and the ‘surveyors’, who tended to be more interested in experimental and experiential analysis and interpretation.

⁸ The excavation of the site itself would be an interesting exercise. However, I am not a ‘professional archaeologist’, and – for reasons that are discussed below – the authorities do not sanction just *anyone* undertaking such digs. The meaning and authority of such categories as ‘professional’ and even ‘archaeologist’, however, are not as straightforward as they might seem. The oral history interview explored the wartime plough-up campaign rather than archaeological monuments per se (see, for instance, Harvey and Riley 2009).

Laying the archaeological narrative open as contingent and complex, the paper draws out the voices of 'others' who are *within* – completely bound-up in this story (cf. Setten 2004). Moving beyond a dichotomy of 'expert' and 'lay', therefore, this paper explores the history of *relations* played out at Broad Down.

The recognition of 'non-institutional' forms of experience is acknowledged within much policy-related literature (for instance, see Riley 2006). More recently, there has been a growing recognition that lay and expert knowledges themselves cannot be regarded as unitary bodies, but represent multiple epistemologies, produced within particular social, cultural and political contexts (Bebbington 1994; Matless 2003; Morris 2006). For Matless, (2003: 356) the language of the local (or 'lay') knowledge serves to constitute as well as to situate debate, while Ellis and Waterton (2005) examine how amateur and professional perspectives are often interwoven and mutually interdependent. Drawing from Morris (2006: 114), this paper investigates the social, historical and institutional relations in which knowledge about Broad Down developed, steering a course away from a dichotomy of 'lay' and 'expert' to produce an account that reflects how Broad Down is an interwoven product of social relations in a particular temporal and spatial context.

Broad Down is subject to the types of "strategies of surveillance and aesthetic monitoring" that Edensor (2005b: 829-30) invokes in his discussion of industrial ruins. The 'authoritative meaning' of Broad Down as a *Bronze Age landscape of national importance* becomes fixed through the production of what Edensor (2005b: 830) calls 'memoriscapes': a national memorial and heritage landscape supported through planning stipulations and heritage management schemes, and underlined through the mediation of interpretation boards on site and statutory documentation on file. According to Buchli and Lucas (2001: 13), organisations constitute their own material record as a way of 'constituting the present' and giving it a 'monumental quality'. In this sense, Broad Down becomes 'fragile' and something that requires 'saving' – preserved for future generations to look at: a reference-coded site on the Historic Environment Record (HER). In order for this to happen, clutter needs to be removed so that the space can be coherently themed as a specifically *Bronze Age landscape*, mediated in a fashion that emphasises a single sanctioned narrative, "encoded as if preserved at a particular juncture" (Edensor 2005b: 831). Caitlin DeSilvey (2007: 880) describes this stabilisation process as a kind of 'semiotic thinning' – necessary in order for "these objects to behave appropriately in the archive". Garrow and Shove (2007: 129) note how "archaeological measuring and describing [serves to] render the unusual and the diffuse coherent", while Bender et al (2007: 27-8) go further, arguing that "standard archaeological texts, with their plans, diagrams and figures, usually represent a rhetoric of authority in which closure is created and debate shut down" In other words, by making objects suitable for easy management and unchallenging leisure consumption, and by providing ordered coherence for the purpose 'proper' scholarly activity, *something* is lost (DeSilvey 2007). DeSilvey's research focussed on sorting and categorising what might be called the 'detritus' of a homestead in Montana (USA):

While there was a certain satisfaction in piecing together a story from the fragments, as I placed the papers in the vinyl sleeves and the objects in boxes, I also felt a curious sense of closure. With each document I filed and each artefact I labelled, I felt my initial fascination slipping away, the chaos of material memories narrowing to a foreshortened chronology (DeSilvey 2007: 880).

Acknowledgement needs to be made to the AHRC for funding what was, by definition, a project that sought to yield unexpected and ambiguous results: Innovation Award: R15611.

Archaeological Stories

Three barrows on Broad Down were first excavated in the summer of 1868 by the Reverend Richard Kirwan.⁹ Following further fieldwork in 1869-70, Kirwan wrote up his excavation and interpretations in two papers in the *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association* (Kirwan 1867-8; 1870-1). While Grinsell (1983: 5-6) is critical when he notes that Kirwan's "technique was outstripped by his zest", he adds that Kirwan was fully "abreast of the archaeological thought and literature of his time". Indeed, the journal entries of Orlando Hutchinson (a contemporary of Kirwan) for August 1869, which refer to that Season's excavations at Broad Down, reveal that it was part of a programme of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, who were assembled for a meeting at nearby Exeter (Hutchinson 2000: 203). Far from being a professional and organised affair, however, the excursion appears as a gentleman's mass picnic:

So large a slice of the afternoon was consumed in the splendid collation in the tent near the six-mile stone, together with many other slices of a variety of good things, that there was no time left to complete the excavation of the barrow, or even to open the kist-vaen (Hutchinson 2000: 204)

Kirwan's focus was on assessing and comparing several important artefacts, which were recovered from the dig.¹⁰ Through his discussion, the reader was introduced to a community of scholars – men (and they are all men) like Kirwan, who were members of intellectual societies and associates of museums – with whom Kirwan corresponded over comparative finds and interpretations. Reference was made to the Bible, to Shakespeare, and the authority of Pliny, while the major artefacts are drawn (both 'as found' and 'reconstructed') and simple cross sections of three barrows are illustrated. Unfortunately, the exact location of these three barrows is never very clear, with the excavation experience as a whole appearing a bit like a 'treasure hunt', with the mounds dug with what might be described as childlike relish, and artefacts dealt with in a similar manner:

...I proceeded at once to take measurements and to make a sketch of it as it lay *in situ* ... in the course of a few minutes, before we had even time completely to uncover the vessel, we had the mortification of observing it crumble into fragments (Kirwan 1868: 644).

FIGURE 3 NEAR HERE PICTURE OF KIRWAN'S DRAWINGS – CUP WITH CHIP ON THE RIM

Further excavations by Peter Orlando Hutchinson (1880) and Hansford Worth (1899) sought to raise practices to a higher level of scientific standardisation (Hutchinson 1880; Worth 1899). They were uniformly critical of Kirwan's practices, with Hutchinson (1880: 139) reflecting upon one mound with the words that "I suspect that it is one of the many that were hastily dug into by Mr. Kirwan" and another as being "one more of the too many hurriedly attacked in 1870". Hutchinson and Worth, who are described by Grinsell (1983: 6) as high standard 'recorders and observers' rather than proper excavators, are the first commentators to provide detailed plans and maps. They also provide accurate measurements and a more sophisticated and

⁹ There were further excavation events over the following couple of summers before Richard Kirwan drowned in a bathing accident at Sidmouth in September 1872 (Grinsell 1983: 5).

¹⁰ See figure 3 for instance.

systematised method of categorization. Notably, photography was used to aid surveying of the monument (Hutchinson 1880: 134). Notable too, are the decreasing references to authorities such as the Bible and classical scholars, although the feel of an amateurish boys' adventure being narrated is still strong.

I then went down on my knees, and thrusting my arm and hand in as far as I could reach, felt about the dark corners for another [Bronze Age] cup. 'Perhaps there's a snake in there', said Mr Heineken. Didn't I pull my hand back! (Hutchinson 1880: 137, *punctuation and expression as original*)

It is the high level of professionalization therefore, that most distinguishes Aileen Fox's (1949) excavation report from this earlier work. Amusing tangents and personal anecdotes are now completely erased. This process of professionalization is also reflected in the intellectual circle that Fox draws upon to support her ideas, and through which to disseminate her work. It was wholly institutionalised within higher education, with the University College of the South West taking the lead, and professional academic conferences now replacing Society picnics; formal academic funding streams replacing independent incomes as the vehicles for such work:

This paper was given to the Prehistoric Conference held at University College, Exeter. ... I am deeply indebted to the Museum Curator [and his assistant] for allowing access to the specimens, ... and to Dr. Grahame Clark, Prof. Stuart Piggott and Mr. G. Wilmot for their helpful comments made during the conference. The field work, which forms the basis of this paper, was carried out with the aid of a grant from the University College of the South West (Fox 1949: 1).

This transition towards a more technical and scientific endeavour was not without its critics. Working locally in east Devon during the interwar period, George Carter was referred to by Aileen Fox (2000: 117) as being of the 'lunatic fringe'. Carter's views of some archaeological sites close to Broad Down were certainly out of step, but it is his assessment and implied criticism of the archaeological establishment that is more striking.¹¹ Perhaps echoing a longing for enchantment – or at least deploring the lack of imagination in his contemporaries – Carter noted how the "advance in the technique of fieldwork has outstripped the interpretation of evidence brought to light" (Carter 1942: 2, cited in Pebblebed 2009). Scientific consistency and replicability, together with increasingly accurate measurement had been augmented with laboratory analysis to transform survey and excavation practices. The later nineteenth century had seen the rise of photography, and from the 1920s, pioneers such as OGS Crawford had combined this with the episteme of modern technology to develop aerial photography as a new tool within the growing suite of archaeological practices. It is perhaps the breathtaking self-confidence of a group who feel that they have nothing to learn from people such as George Carter that is most eye-catching when, at the Exeter Conference of the Prehistoric Society in 1949, a large part of the audience (including Fox and Crawford) walk out as George Carter rises to speak (Fox 2000: 117).

A report by Leslie Grinsell (1983) in the *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* forms the culmination-so-far of archaeological science at Broad Down.

¹¹ Interestingly, recent re-assessments of his work has suggested a great deal more worth in Carter's archaeological interpretations than most of his contemporaries allowed. See Pebblebed 2009 (<http://www.pebblebedsproject.org.uk/> accessed 23/11/2009)

Monuments are categorised and placed within a context that allows both easy comparison with work elsewhere, and interpretation for the needs of the site's acquired status as a 'national monument'.¹² Grinsell's (1983) paper is cast as a definitive statement of work at Broad Down, which he places into a wider study of barrows of South and East Devon. Indeed, the HER, the Archaeology Service of Devon County Council and the report by Simpson and Noble (1993) all appear to treat Grinsell's study as the base-line from which preservation ideas and planning ideals are built. Broad Down is a *Bronze Age necropolis* of certain accurately measured proportions, and comprising a certain number of surveyed elements. Grinsell sets out a framework of scientific explanation, culminating with a 'complete' categorisation of sites based upon morphology and location: "Since around 1953, the field investigators of the archaeology branch of the Ordnance Survey have brought the recording of most of the barrows in this area to a high pitch of excellence and the fullest use has been made of their records, together with those of the Sites and Monuments Register at County Hall" (Grinsell 1983: 6). Grinsell's interpretation is sober, objective and safe – not tempted by wild suppositions, tangents, or provocative hypotheses. Indeed, he politely ignores such (apparently) eccentric offshoots as George Carter's interpretations, preferring instead to stick with the straightforward morphological categorisations of 'ring cairns', 'ditch types' and 'retaining circles'.¹³ Indeed, one could say that the site is now 'safe' for the public display as part of an institutionally supported system of 'countryside curatorship'. "Since the 1939-45 War, several barrows [in Devon – though none at Broad Down] have been excavated in accordance with modern standards" (Grinsell 1983: 6). While championing the standardisation of such investigative practices and underlining the virtue of 'modern methods' in the production of knowledge about Broad Down that is legible and easily translatable for further academic enquiry, one cannot help thinking that – akin to DeSilvey's feelings of curatorial activity at her field site in Montana – that *something* gets lost along the way. DeSilvey (2007: 880) talks about the semiotic thinning that is required for objects to behave within appropriate scholarly boundaries. The oral recollection of a 'Bronze Age burial mound' as a cattle ramp, however, seems to be a case where objects specifically do *not* behave, but, to use Buchli and Lucas's (2001: 5) expression, "act back upon us in unexpected ways". It is suggestive of a semiotic depth that existing scientific procedures have sought to exclude or at least close off.

Although not himself seeking to give a final word on the archaeology of Broad Down, Grinsell (1983: 20), in his short section subtitled *Future Programme*, both suggests a closure of alternative (non scientific) possibilities, while also espousing a very modern method of preservation for posterity. Grinsell's (1983) *Future Programme* centres around the twin requirements for more artefacts and specimens to be collected (through field walking), and the possibilities of aerial photography to bring technology to bear on a more detailed morphological categorisation. In terms of policy, Grinsell's (1983: 20) *Future Programme* underlined the need for "protection of the better examples of each type of barrow" – through isolating and surrounding them with wooden posts – and "causing landowners and farmers to be aware of the heritage value". In other words, he advocated the modern selection of the 'best examples' of each 'type', as defined through scientific categorisation procedures, to be stabilised in both form and meaning. By definition, this practice of stabilisation is

¹² Leslie Grinsell was Keeper of Archaeology at Bristol City Museum between 1952 and 1972 and was a key figure in South West archaeological endeavour during the post-war period.

¹³ G.E.L. Carter included a 'pebbled mound' categorisation of Bronze Age sites. Grinsell (1983: 6) rejects this, noting that since Carter's interpretations were "out of step with normal archaeological thought. It has accordingly been considered expedient to omit from this paper his 'pebbled mounds'...".

anachronistic. Any systems of selection and conservation produce as much as they supposedly preserve (DeSilvey 2007: 888). Indeed, any act of conservation or practice of preservation should be recognised as an important and active process that is contingent on the present and very much *for the future*, as a sort of 'prospective memory' (Harvey 2001. See also Holtorf 2000-05).

With interested amateurs sidelined, professional archaeologists increasingly worked in conjunction with the State through a system of research funding and landscape scheduling. During the later twentieth century, this system of governance took control over the management of Broad Down's meaning and responsibility for its general oversight, and thereby constituted a material record that provides the site with a monumental quality (*cf.* Buchli and Lucas 2001: 13). Regular visits by officers of the Devon Archaeology Service outlined the extent of survival and threats to the physical integrity of the site, noting tree growth, cultivation patterns and appearance of rubbish dumping.¹⁴ In 1993, a report by Simpson and Noble (1993) was commissioned in order to develop a management plan. This led to a re-scheduling of the entire monument in 1998. A final report in 2002 assessed the area for its potential for damage from ploughing activity.¹⁵

FIGURE 4 NEAR HERE

MONTAGE of the scheduling letters and documents, - map from Simpson and Noble, and the Ploughing letter.

It is through such 'objective' archaeological investigation and devices such as the HER that ambiguity and multiplicity are banished in what Edensor (2005b: 831) calls a 'dramatic fixing' of meaning. Mystery is eclipsed and identity is apparently stabilized – at least until future professional archaeologists enter the arena in order to build on the existing work. Within this narration of the various reports and assessments that have been undertaken by a series of amateur and professional archaeologists over the last 150 years, one can trace a linear biography of archaeological progress and the rise of modernity. The development of superior technologies, more accurate surveying and measurement, photography and comparative scientific work on artefacts can be seen, together with a trend towards both greater professionalisation and nationalisation. This process of 'nationalisation' is reflected by the increasing statutory governmental framework that seeks to portray it as a site of 'national significance', with a role in enhancing the quality of the life of the 'nation'.

In the 1860s, the Reverend Richard Kirwan had a lot to say about Pliny and 'the Kelts', the Bible and the Phoenicians, but as archaeological endeavour 'moves forward' one can see how the study of Broad Down increasingly takes on the mantle of positivist science. The shadows of Homer and of the Old Testament are ironed out and disappear as the landscape and its monuments are increasingly defined in the image of the State – through recreation schemes, conservation programmes, car parks, interpretation boards, biodiversity agendas and planning guidelines (see Simpson and Noble 1993). A Bronze Age Landscape is defined and a management plan is put in place. But, of course, this is not really a *Bronze Age Landscape*, and the linear narrative of archaeological science hides a number of voices on the margins. As the farmer's invocation of the 'Bronze Age burial mound' as having the material qualities of a cattle ramp reminds us, other remembered meanings and

¹⁴ For instance, see the Sites and Monuments Register entry for monument 29634.2, at gr: SY17429444.

¹⁵ See letter from P. Manning (20th August 2002) in connection to the area SY19SE). MS: DCC, AU, XXXX).

trajectories of Broad Down act to enrich and sometimes confound the official institutional interpretations.

Methodologically, this approach broaches some of the sentiments of non-representational (or *more-than-representational*) theory, in being open to an affective realm – of the haptic, the precognitive, the intuitive and the emotional – in terms of enlivening and animating academic enquiry (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000, Lorimer 2005).¹⁶ As Lorimer (2003: 202) argues, such practices are epistemologically more challenging when attention shifts from the contemporary scene to past practice, but, as Bender et al (2007: 28) note: “there are always *other* possibilities and *multiple* interpretations”. Much depends upon the source material – of the reading between the lines of archival and previous scientific accounts, and upon what is not said as much as what is (*cf.* Griffin 2008: 95-6). Matless (2000) argues for a creative engagement in and imaginative interpretation of representational source material; a purposively reflective endeavour that is underlined by Antoinette Burton (2004: 289) in her call to extend the conception of the archive by reading ‘against the grain’. This is resonant of Pearson and Shanks’ (2001: 64-5) idea of the *deep map*, which “attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the discursive and the sensual; the conflation of oral testimony, anthology, memoir, biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place”. In Pearson and Shanks’ (2001: 67) view, absence and uncertainty, ‘the space between materials, documents and narratives’ provides a creative space that can generate authentic insight. Through bouncing off a seemingly banal oral history testament of a local farmer, I am seeking to produce a more-than-representational account of Broad Down within an (albeit very recent) historical context, and so act to break what Steedman (2001: 10) refers to as the ‘constraints’ that conventional source material confers.

Treating the archaeological reports as source material, therefore, this paper now moves to undermine the processes of ‘semiotic thinning’, by drawing on what DeSilvey (2007: 888) calls an ‘imaginative empathy’. While tackling issues of emotion and experience within an historical context is, by definition, problematic, we have to recognise that there are ‘shadows’ within the very construction of the archaeological narrative that offer alternative visions. We need to read between the lines and against the grain of scientific accounts in order to mobilise the otherwise powerless and neglected as partners in the construction of Broad Down. Drawing from Laurier and Philo (2004: 434), there is a double imperative: “to be faithful to the sources in your reading, hearing, and seeing, whilst also being faithful in your studies to the places, events and occasions out of which they emerged”.

Other stories

Lorimer (2003: 200) argues that convention has led scholars towards what he describes as ‘high academic debate’ in order to explore intellectual developments: “the resultant accounts are, by definition, dominated by grand, scholarly stories set in the quasi-mythological and exclusive spaces of ‘the academy’”. Following Lorimer therefore, I want to undermine these straightforward accounts by acknowledging those ‘minor figures’ who are engaged in knowledge production. Lorimer (2003) suggests that making space for these ‘small stories’ would be complementary and supplementary. To this, I would add that such small stories might also be challenging, through undermining and destabilising existing (meta)narratives of knowledge production.

¹⁶ For an example of intuitive practice akin to the burial mound/cattle ramp example, see the practice of hay baling in Riley and Harvey (2007: 403-4).

At Broad Down, many of these minor figures are the supporting cast of the progressive archaeological performance – the workers digging at the site.¹⁷ Other ‘voices’ are not those of people at all. Together, these minor figures appear liminal to the effort of archaeological progress: they are absolutely essential and yet never fully acknowledged. Indeed, as archaeological science becomes more sophisticated with systematised referencing, the mention of this small army of diggers becomes more and more air brushed.

Although the excavations of the 1860s appear to be driven by the endeavour of a single author – that of Richard Kirwan – some inkling of the experience of this event is hinted at in Orlando Hutchinson’s diary entry for Saturday 21st August 1869 (Hutchinson 2000: 203), when he states that “the afternoon was quiet, warm and delightful and some two hundred or more people sat in groups on the heath”. Hutchinson’s observation complicates the single authorial voice of Kirwan’s excavation report.¹⁸ Even in terms of directing digging operations, Kirwan (1868: 624) noted that it was ‘the workmen’ who indicated that the alternate layers he saw in the soil profile “did not belong to the locality”. Whether scientifically ‘correct’ or otherwise, Kirwan at least allowed ‘the workmen’ a voice, albeit one that remained anonymous. Indeed, Kirwan’s entire effort, at times, seems to have been directed by the whims, thoughts and superstitions of his workforce:

On taking a careful survey of the ground, and preparing for operations, our attention was directed by the workmen to the fact that the summit of the mound appeared to ‘sound hollow’. We therefore commenced by cutting a trench four feet wide in the direction indicated by the men, who worked with great energy in the expectation that their long-deferred hopes were about to be realized, and that the ‘crock of gold’ with which these barrows are universally associated in the rustic mind was at length within their grasp (Kirwan 1868: 641)

Is there, perhaps, a space within this passage for the agency of superstition? Superstition and the ‘present absence’ of the workmen’s expectations – or at least Kirwan’s assumptions of the workmen’s motivation – of a ‘crock of gold’, seems to have played a large role in directing and guiding the archaeological excavations through its hold over the attentions of the workforce.¹⁹

On other occasions during Kirwan’s excavation, a number of human and physical actors are brought together – quite literally in the case of Kirwan’s ‘star find’, a drinking cup which was chipped by a workman’s pickaxe in the process of its unearthing (Kirwan 1868: 625).²⁰ “On the removal of this cup it was taken to a neighbouring cottage, and as it began to crack and warp by exposure to the

¹⁷ In the 19th Century, these would have mostly been comprised of local farm labourers hired on site. In the 20th century, such roles were increasingly taken on by students. Most (if not all) archaeology degrees in the UK comprise a mandatory period of ‘excavation fieldwork’, with students spending a number of weeks on the site of various ‘expert-led’ digs.

¹⁸ For allied work that explores how an apparently single authorial voice is constructed in archaeological accounts, see Tilley et al (2000).

¹⁹ At an excavation at nearby Blackbury Castle in September 1859, Hutchinson seems to have been similarly directed by a ‘tradition’, which “says the slain were after a battle buried here” (Hutchinson 2000: 139). See Franklin (2006) for further examples of the role of folklore in South West archaeology.

²⁰ Kirwan’s drawing of this drinking cup – together with the chip on its rim made by the workman’s pickaxe – can be seen in figure 3.

atmosphere, it was immersed in water” (Kirwan 1868: 625-6). In addition to the role of the workman and his pickaxe, therefore, this account also gives prominence to the material qualities of the artefact itself through its fragility (see Ingold 2007). Indeed, Kirwan makes several references to the ‘destructive influence’ of the ‘atmosphere’, and of a propensity for artefacts to ‘crumble into fragments’ on exposure (Kirwan 1868: 644 for instance). Drawing from the work of DeSilvey (2006) and Hill (2006), we see here an example both of the agency of ‘things’ playing an active role within systems of negotiation, and an example of how the material qualities of objects (and particularly their fragility) may act to confound attempts at collection and classification. We are never told anything about the people who lived in the cottage where this ‘drinking cup’ artefact found temporary refuge. However, before it entered into a circle of intellectual endeavour as the subject of widespread correspondence between gentlemen antiquaries and the institutional expertise of the wider academy,²¹ another voice appears in the form of a local craftsman. Experimental archaeology now forms an important sub-discipline and regularly demonstrated in the popular media such as *Time Team* (see Hurcombe 2004 for instance). In 1868, Kirwan took his star artefact to a ‘skilful practical turner’ who “expressed himself satisfied that it had been made on a pole-lathe”, and added information about how the handle could have been added (Kirwan 1868: 627).

Reflecting the social stratification and hierarchy of Victorian Britain, most of these minor figures are not named in the excavation reports; at least where people *are* named, it is as a result of their social standing. Mr Heinekan appears as an adventurous side-kick to Hutchinson’s role as scientist, supplying the amusing quips and comments to the archaeologist ‘sleuth’ (Hutchinson 1880). For the 1868 excavation however, one of the visitors, Mr Humphrey Blackmore of Torquay was a named minor figure, ‘discovering’ another major find – that of an incense cup, “amongst the debris thrown out by the workmen from the trench” (Kirwan 1868: 635). The experience of the 1868 excavation, therefore, should be recognised as a relational enterprise in which expert archaeologists, lay workers and even passing tourists were bound together in an enterprise of knowledge making.

The named ‘experts’ included both the Reverend Kirwan, as well as a circle of loosely institutionalised middle class intellectuals. But there was also a large body of un-named individuals, some of whom (such as the wood turner) were not present at the site, but whose experience and knowledge came to be embedded in both Broad Down, and the artefacts and publications that came from the interactive experience of excavation work.²² Broad Down has never simply been an ‘archaeological monument’; people have lived in the site, nearby, or passed through for generations. The appearance of the site today, as well as the record of its archaeological and scientific analysis, is littered with their memories. Hutchinson and Heinekan, for instance, made a discovery of what they interpreted as ‘defensive works’ after watching some men ploughing in a field as they drove past on the road (Hutchinson 1880: 144). And although he dismissed the opinion of a ‘non-expert’ from a lower social class, Hutchinson at least saw fit to publish another episode involving ‘lay knowledge’ when he stated (1880: 135) that:

Under a foot or so of topsoil, there was considerable thickness of reddish-sandy earth blotched with yellow, and a farmer on horseback, who was passing eastwards along the northern road, turned to look, and gave it as

²¹ Including members and associates of the British Museum, The Royal Society, The Royal Irish Academy, The Royal Institute of Cornwall and the Sussex Archaeological Society.

²² Much of these experiences are resonant with the bonds of ‘mateship’ that Wilmore (2007) puts forward as representing the collective experience of working conditions.

his opinion that the reddish earth did not belong to the neighbourhood. I do not always accept these haphazard assertions very confidently.

Although only recounted 19 years after the event, it was also Orlando Hutchinson who, in 1861, watched as 32 loads of stones were carted away from the barrows in order to erect a building at the nearby Lovehayne Farm (Hutchinson 1880: 142-3). It seems that this same local farmer also took away a number of Bronze-Age implements that were sold as scrap at Honiton Market, while another minor figure took away a large number of curbstones sometime over the winter 1870-71 (Hutchinson 1880: 142). Indeed, the very first modern account of Broad Down's archaeology tells of a similar episode of stone robbing: an entry in July 1763 in the journal of Matthew Lee Esquire of Ebford, recounts a journey that he had recently made when he found men taking stones from the barrows in order to construct the new turnpike road running north-south over Broad Down (Hutchinson 1880: 140). Further details of this mid-eighteenth century digging are hinted at through an oral tradition within Hutchinson's journal entry for Wednesday 17th August 1859, which recalls:

Approaching Broad Down, we stopped at a cottage and saw an old man aged 89. In answer to our questions, he said that when the road over the Down was made, now about a hundred years ago, his grandfather was one of the men employed. They cut right through a barrow near Roncomb's Girt [Gate?] and found one or two urns of pottery with bones in them (Hutchinson 2000: 136).

As part of her own self construction as a professional and objective scientist, Aileen Fox (1949: 3) dismissively notes Kirwan, Worth and Hutchinson as 'antiquarian excavators'. Notwithstanding the scientific approach of Fox's endeavours as reported in her (1949) Prehistoric Society conference paper, Fox's (2000) own later recollections of this occasion tend to complicate the story of objective and disinterested science. Her paper sought to tame the open-endedness of the east Devon finds, with artefacts 'falling into place' within a "cultural province analogous and contemporary with the second phase of the Wessex Culture" (Fox 2000: 117). Her reflections of the occasion, however, are tinged with her personality and ambition, with her position as a female (and titled) archaeologist who was struggling to be taken seriously meaning that professional and political expediency was demanded: "I felt the conference was important, because it had brought leading archaeologists like Stuart Piggott, Christopher Hawkes, Gordon Childe and Grahame Clark to Exeter, and had bolstered my position at the University (Fox 2000: 117). One can sense, however, Fox's patent unease as she follows the 'great and good' in their walk out of George Carter's paper.

The accounts of the Devon Archaeology Service reveal a concern for stability of both presence and meaning, and yet their records reflect a situation in which – like Edmonds (2006: 173) found in Cumbria – "change is the norm and stability the construct". This stability has been sought through the site's statutory protection and entry onto the HER,²³ and yet the Historic Environment Record also shows how one barrow was damaged by the Home Guard on exercise during the Second World War, while many have been damaged by agricultural and building activities since. Edensor (2005b: 833) argues that the modern world can never become the seamlessly regulated realm of its image, "for it continues to be haunted by the neglected [and disposed of. ...These] ghostly memories cannot be entirely expunged". Despite tight

²³ The central sites referred to in this paper include the scheduled monuments 24957, 29634/01-08. All are listed and further commented upon in Simpson and Noble (1993).

regulation and scientific classification, Broad Down continues to be a site of alternative narratives.

Drawing from Hill (2007), it can be suggested that objects such as amulets – or in this case, burial mounds – continue to have ‘magical’ properties. Even having been consigned a specific label they retain the potential to enchant, disrupting the narratives of progress. At Broad Down for instance, there has been several instances of slippage in the meaning of the site. Some mounds have shown signs of becoming modern centres of superstition and magic with ornamental trees being purposefully planted on their crests. While many of the mounds have become the haunt of what Edensor (2005b: 841) might call ‘poltergeists’, but which modern legal codes prefer to define as ‘fly-tippers’. Following Hill (2007), therefore, we see present day narratives of archaeological science and national heritage being disrupted by, on the one hand, a trend of discarding material through dumping, and on the other, perhaps a modern longing for enchantment. Following Edensor (2005b: 834), we are witnessing Broad Down as ‘excessive space’, where “a plenitude of fragmented stories, elisions, fantasies, inexplicable objects, and possible events” present a history that can begin and end anywhere. Broad Down becomes a liminal space; in a state of indeterminacy, with attempts to exorcise or sweep away other narratives never being quite successful – change being the norm, stability the construct. Although official accounts now pay no attention to stories about ‘crocks of gold’, superstition and the agency of fairies may still have a role at Broad Down.

The use of one of the barrows to load cows onto the back of a lorry is just one further interpretation of the mounds on Broad Down. Interestingly, the farmer that we interviewed (*born c. 1914*) who had farmed on Broad Down since the 1920s and who introduced mechanization during the Second World War, is almost certainly the same farmer who appears as a ‘poltergeist’ in Fox’s (1949: 10) archaeological account, when she noted that one of the barrows in the centre of Broad Down, was now “much reduced by tractor ploughing”. In revealing and naming this ‘poltergeist’, however, we underline the importance of the materiality of the site itself, as well as how a relational understanding of place and action can help us map out a network of knowledge production at Broad Down. The scientific interpretation of this archaeology of ‘national importance’ slipped during the Second World War in favour of a *new* national interpretation of the landscape that was based on the productive capacity of land to be ploughed up in the national war effort (see Short et al 2000, Murdoch and Ward 1997). The farmer, who was directed to plough up a lot of pasture in the name of the nation’s war effort, had neither official nor personal compunction to save or preserve archaeological artefacts ‘of national importance’ on his land. He was, however, impressed by the material qualities of one mound in particular to preserve its physical integrity for the purpose of agricultural need – to load his cattle onto a lorry.

Edmonds (2006: 168, 186) turns to oral history to show how the history of Langdale in Cumbria is a ‘history of relations’ that is never singular or stable. At Broad Down, we also find that the identities and relations that are bound up in the lived experiences of the landscape are more tangled and messy than the scientific narratives allow. Far from an inevitable sense of progress, the scientific archive of excavation reports and heritage plans show a large number of minor figures. The neat and one dimensional story of scientific progress is a fiction, while the institutional fix of preservation appears to be forlorn in its search for stability. The oral testimony of a farmer, who has lived next to the monument all his life, simply underlines the futility of trying to fix meaning in the landscape. For the farmer, the burial mounds became cattle ramps – the carefully surveyed dots on a map and accurately measured dimensions on a list of sites that are of ‘national significance’ is

simply noted as the common land on which a group of gypsies set up camp in the 1920s. For the farmer, therefore, this is not a 'Bronze Age' landscape of 'national importance', but a personal landscape that national circumstances during the Second World War caused him to largely obliterate.

Conclusion:

The examination of ancient monuments has, to draw from Rose and Wylie (2006: 476), mostly been concerned with measurements, visual representations, distances, surfaces and topography, and it is through emphasising movement, instability, fluidity and heterogeneity, that we can make these accounts 'strange'. It is through thinking space relationally, such that it is viewed as a product of practices, trajectories and inter-relations, that we can see it as forever in the process of making rather than something already made (Massey 2004). As 'things' and context change, so the relationships between humans and humans, and humans and non-humans, change (*cf.* Griffin 2008: 93).

As part of this practice to animate the production of knowledge, the 'field' should not be treated as a discrete entity, but be understood in relation to the experiences out of which its meaning emerges. In other words, we need to understand local specificities – of place, people and experience – as well as their wider social and intellectual context, or geometries of power, through which Broad Down is produced, consumed and negotiated. Rather than aiming for a (conceited) notion of 'total explanation' that reflects nineteenth century scientific desire, a conception of 'unfinalisability' is important. By treating the meanings of Broad Down as fluid and multiple, and by accepting that it is, ultimately, unknowable, this paper has opened out space for an interpretive and imaginative reconstruction (*cf.* Lorimer 2003: 204; Tilley 2009). This is resonant with Shanks' (1992) desire to reclaim the sentiments and feeling of landscape archaeology as a 'sensuous practice', and with Tilley's (2009) cosmologies; of an embodied sensory exploration of the landscape.

This is a landscape that is not constructed, but *engaged with* (Rose 2006). We need to repopulate the historic landscape – through reading between the lines of scientific accounts, and by using oral histories in their role as practice-based and subjective narratives that carry the potential to refocus attention on both landscapes and ancient monuments as the relational products of people and things. These accounts – or creative biographies – do not provide a 'truer' account, but they do open up questions for how we construct scientific narratives of features such as burial mounds or cattle ramps. 'Strange' or 'other' accounts that are thrown up in oral histories call for us to excavate the normative written record of scientific discovery and heritage management in order to find further voices and can add to the contribution of historical geographers and archaeologists to unveiling the embodied and fluid understandings of historic features. In this sense, these small stories can be seen as entry points to the working out of "conceptual ideas in local contexts" (Lorimer 2003: 214). Through reference to oral history, and through reading between the lines of excavation reports, this paper has outlined the inevitably subjective and relational human experience of (ancient) landscapes. Broad Down is a microcosm. I am not claiming that all ancient monuments are the same, but I am seeking a more open-ended and fluid notion of the historic landscape.

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FIGURE 1:
Location Map, showing the Broad Down area of East Devon, UK.

FIGURE 2
Two of the burial mounds on Broad Down (July 2007). Or are they cattle ramps?

FIGURE 3
Some illustrations of finds by the Reverend Richard Kirwan (1867-68), The chip, made by a workman's axe, is clearly seen on the rim of the drinking cup (r).

FIGURE 4:
Montage of official documents at Broad Down: (a) Recreation and planning map (1993); (b) Scheduling document (1998); (c) Field sketch map on ploughing report (2002); (d) HER map of the area; (e) Detail of the HER notes of a site used by fly-tippers.

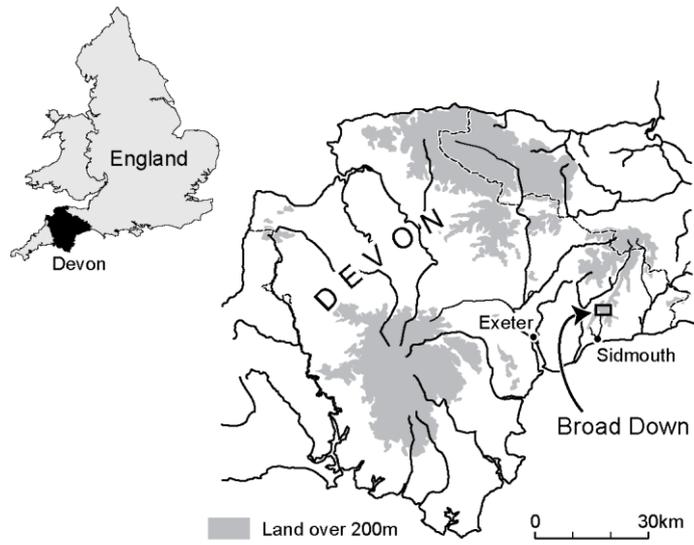


Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3 at 2/3 life

size

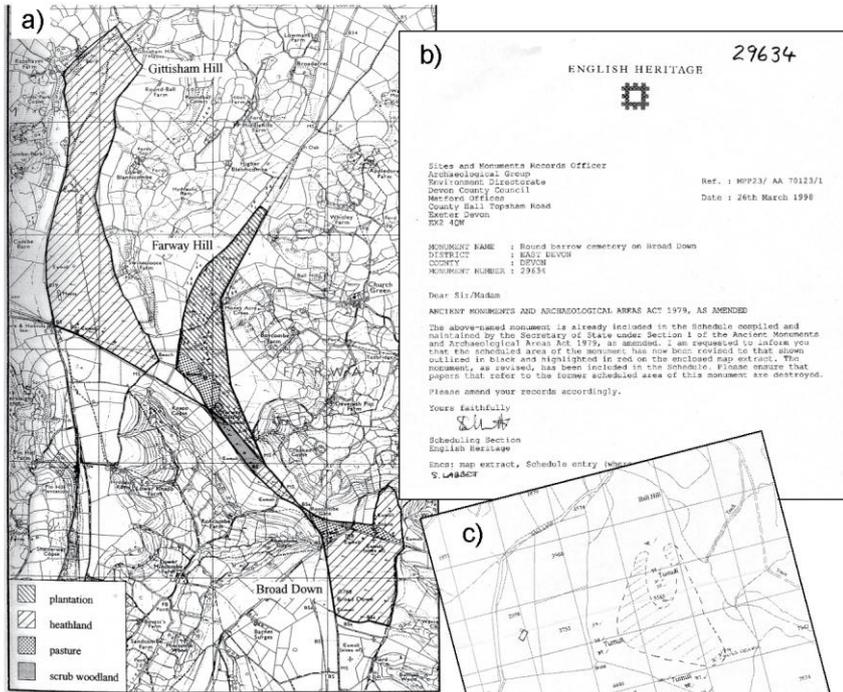


Fig. 3 Present landscape.

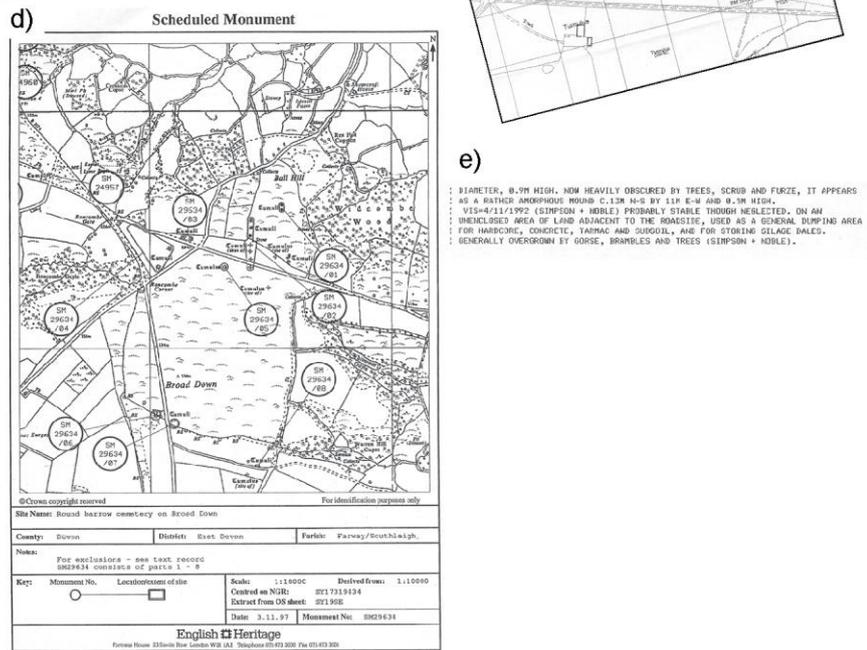


Fig 4 PORTRAIT

OR

Fig 4 LANDSCAPE below

