Three very different hillforts: excavations on the Ridgeway

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Excavations 1994 - 2000

[Map showing locations such as Badbury Camp, Uffington Castle, Ram's Hill, Segsbury Camp, Alfred's Castle, and other places mentioned in the text.]
Things to think about

• ‘continuity’, c800 BC to 5th century AD
or
• ‘prehistoric history’, landscape locales as historical mnemonics = complex site biographies
• ‘hillforts’ as a class of site?
• meaning/interpretation (especially when it comes to hillfort function)
Uffington Castle

The western enclosure

The linear ditch
Romano-British, EBA round barrow within
The ramparts

- 1\textsuperscript{st} phase, box rampart, 7\textsuperscript{th} century BC

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} phase, dump rampart, 4\textsuperscript{th} century BC

- Abandonment?
The interior – very little Iron Age activity
Romano-British ‘re-use’

Artefact-rich RB soil

Oven
A persistent place

• Pre-hillfort – long barrow, round barrows
• LBA landscape, linear, settlements
• The date of the Horse?
• Hillfort – two phases, then for 600 years?
• But remember the scouring
• A continuing special/sacred place
RB, 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD

The western enclosure

Breaks in the ramparts

Activity in the interior

50+ burials in the long mound

The Horse could already be nearly 1,000 years old – an RB ancient monument?

History inscribed on the landscape through genealogy and mythology?
Segsbury Camp – 12km away
House/pit groups (not many!) – periodic re-use
Understanding very different forms of logic:

1. The significance of entrance orientation?
2. The ramparts

Internal structure

Ard marks below
4th century 10 fold expansion – re-orientation of pottery

Internal structure of ‘exotic’ stone

Massive external ditch
Segsbury

- Communal place developed as a centre for a dispersed population
- Periodic re-use, not permanent
- Expansion of ‘catchment’ area in 4th century
- Focus on sheep farming
- Abandoned by the end of the Iron Age
- Nothing Roman (economic change sheep to increased arable)
- Unlike Uffington where re-use was based on continuing (but changing) religious practices
Alfred’s Castle – 10km away
- small and large enclosures
Chronology

- Early Bronze Age round barrows
- Linear ditches (LBA)
- Early Iron Age small and large Enclosures (mainly 5th/4th century BC)
- Romano-British farmstead (1st-3rd century AD)
- Late Saxon activity
The large enclosure
The small enclosure - rampart
Interior use – densely occupied
Alfred’s Castle

• Small occupied area but permanent (is it a hillfort?)

• A different social role to Uffington (sacred?) and Segsbury (economic?), the same people?
Conclusions

• The category of ‘hillfort’ questioned through the detail of excavation, surface similarities but functional and chronological differences are of more interest

• Prehistoric history?

• Interpretation!