

Iron Age – 600 BC-AD 43

Even a small rise in sea levels in the Iron Age is likely to have had a significant impact on the harbour since much the relatively low-lying basin would have flooded as a result. The ingress of saltwater would have meant that saltmarsh became more established and prevalent. Dry land in the AONB would have reduced as the environment became noticeably wetter and more maritime in feel.

The increase in saltmarsh may explain why much of the Iron Age evidence in the AONB (Fig 10) relates to salt working. A link has even been postulated between salt working and two important sites in the vicinity – Tourner Bury hillfort and the temple, both on Hayling Island although only the former lying within the AONB. However, such a speculative link has yet to be proven.

Tourner Bury hillfort (Hants SMR 23,329.00; 473150 099860) commanded the western part of the entrance to Chichester Harbour (Fig 11). It was first documented in AD 1518 as land called Tornors (Tor Shore or land of William de Tornore) and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM number HA 38). The monument was partially excavated in 1959 and 1971 (Bradley and Fulford 1976). It is a univallate ringwork of 2.6 hectares occupying a raised tongue of land extending between two former tidal inlets. There is a single original entrance to the west, approached by a hollow way. It stands to a height of some 4m and the interior of the site is featureless except for furrows from broad rig cultivation. The rampart on the east side of the enclosure was sectioned in 1959, and appeared to be constructed of a single phase of dumping. The rampart had been built on a ground surface that showed signs of burning but there was nothing to suggest a date for the enclosure. A shallow intrusion on the forward slope of the rampart produced Roman pottery and material from a hearth.

In 1971, a limited area of the tail of the rampart was sectioned to the north of the original entrance. The bank consisted of two tips of barren clay overlying a lens of angular gravel. A burnt patch within this layer included small fragments of Iron Age pottery. The shallow intrusion where the Roman pottery was found in the earlier excavation was re-excavated, and was found to be a continuous scarp cut into the earlier rampart.

A cutting of a 19th century cart road was also cleared and recorded and from the results of this, the excavators argue that two successive ramparts were present, the earlier represented by thick homogenous tips of barren sandy clay and the later by a series of thinner layers of similar composition. A single post hole may have been part of a line of buried struts used to tie back the front of a revetted rampart.

The excavators say that a 3rd-1st century date BC might be appropriate for the pottery sealed under the earthwork, but that this only constitutes a date on or after the earthwork was built (ie, a *terminus post quem*). The burning may suggest the ground was cleared before construction. The function of the enclosure remains unknown, although the excavators point to the fact that Iron Age salt workings in the area produce pottery of similar date to that found at the hillfort. This was a major period of development for the hillforts on the Downland chalk. There may have been some reuse of the fort on the seaward side in about AD 250-400.

Much of the recorded industrial activity has been associated with salt working. As mentioned above, this is likely to be linked with the ingress of salt water as sea levels rose, flooding the low lying basin of the harbour and increasing the growth of salt marsh.

In addition to this, the channels of the harbour offered good transport. Many of the known salt workings in the AONB are concentrated on Chidham's west coast and at the head of Thorney Channel. Iron Age salt works were surveyed by Bradley and some are known from excavations at Chidham (Bedwin 1980) (Chi SMR 205, 251; 477930 103830, 477900 103780). At Bradley's salt working site 18, the latter of these two sites, a small Early Iron Age pit may have been an evaporation pan for salt production. Both sites were also yielded Neolithic pottery. Another salt working site at Chidham (Chi SMR 248; 478200 103930), Bradley's site 19, the finds of calcinated flint, a few Iron Age and Roman sherds and a few fragments of burnt clay, may have been instead associated with ploughing in the area (Bedwin 1980). Slightly further north up the coast at Nutbourne Creek, a Middle to Late Iron Age salt working site (Chi SMR 240; 477980 103480) was also found (Bradley's Site B) in addition to a Roman inhumation.

Salt workings are also to be found at the north end of Thorney Channel. Bradley's site 18 (Chi SMR 250; 477570 104810) is located below the high water mark and the dating is imprecise (Bedwin 1980). Bradley's site 16 (Chi SMR 253; 476990 104730) yielded a large feature with sherds of pottery and calcinated flint. Cartwright's site CH-52 (Chi SMR 220; 478000 103430) yielded a number of Early Iron Age and Late Iron Age/Romano-British sherds (Cartwright 1984). At Thornham Boat Yard, Iron Age occupation debris of 'uncertain nature' (Chi SMR 244; 476350 104710) was overlain by a large 1st century Roman saltern.

Two Iron Age salt workings were located on the headland between Bosham and Bosham Hoe. Bradley's Site 20 (Chi SMR 254; 479770 102780) consisted of five badly struck cores and flakes and a scatter of calcinated flint on the shore. Bradley's site 21 (Chi SMR 255; 479800 102490) included fired clay fragments, but these were probably not briquetage (Bedwin 1980).

The Iron Age has other evidence for industrial activity where it is less clear what processes were taking place. Four hearths were visible in 1969 in a section of low sea cliff opposite Verner Common (Hants SMR 23,519.00, 23,520.00, 23,521.00, 23,522.00; 473400 101670, 473420 101640, 473450 101510, 473450 101460 respectively). These hearths were thought to be Iron Age, although no finds were retrieved. It is plausible that they were associated with salt working, but this is speculation.

Iron Age settlements, major hillforts, and cemeteries are all known from the wider area outside the AONB, for example at Chichester, the Trundle and Westhampnett. However, no evidence for Iron Age settlement has been found within the AONB itself, or indeed in the adjacent Langstone harbour (Allen and Gardiner 2000). Even short-term and temporary timber structures, like that identified in other areas of Iron Age wetlands with salt marsh (Bell *et al* 2000), have not been identified, although that is not to say that they will not be found in the future.

However, although evidence is lacking, an obvious candidate for at least Late Iron Age settlement is Fishbourne. It was a pivotal early Roman site. In fact, Fishbourne may have started life as a placed trading post. Similarly, the fact that Iron Age pottery is scattered across the AONB suggests that there may at least have been temporary or seasonal occupation. Often the pottery has been found in association with pot boilers (large fire-cracked pebbles heated in a fire and placed in a liquid to boil it), for example at Thorham Point (Chi SMR 177, 178; 476550 104400, 476580 104370), on Hayling Island (Hants SMR 23,569.00; 473670 102510) and at Cartwright's site CH-61 (Chi SMR 231; 476930 104880). This last find is interesting, since Iron Age pottery has been found on other

Neolithic sites, too, for example an Early Iron Age potsherd found on a flint working site (Chi SMR 117; 476760 105100), Early Iron Age pottery (Chi SMR 120; 476630 105000) found on Cartwright site CH-63 (Cartwright 1984), at Cartwright's site CH-67 (Chi SMR 233; 476400 104560), and over 250 sherds of Late Iron Age pottery found at Cartwright's site CH-65 (Chi SMR 186; 476380 104700). This is perhaps not enough evidence to demonstrate continuity between these two periods on these sites, but future research may provide the opportunity to investigate the links between these two periods. Early Iron Age pottery has also been found on Thorney (Chi SMR 190; 476580 102430) and in the northeast part of the AONB (Chi SMR 2331; 484000 104000).

A number of stray finds are also known for this period. These include coins, statuary and other items. It would be tempting to see these as evidence to support the theory that the area was becoming increasingly Romanised, a process accelerated by trade with the Continent (a Greek and a Gallo Belgic coin have both been found in the AONB – see below). However, there must be a note of caution about these items that lack a well-dated archaeological context. Chichester was a port, and some of the stray finds may have been imported at a much later date, for example during the 19th century when the concept of the 'Grand Tour' around Europe was popular and items of historical interest were brought back to England (James Kenny pers comm.).

That said, the representation of a Celtic Mother Goddess (Chi SMR 2498; 484000 104000), found near Fishbourne may be pre-Conquest, although the cult was revived and popular among Gaulish troops in Imperial Army especially in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. A 'Celtic head made of Bath stone' (Chi SMR 2440; 481600 104700) was found north-east of Bosham. The Greek coin is of Hieron II (275-216 BC) found in the mud at Hermitage (Chi SMR 96; 475000 105000). The Gallo Belgic coin and a Langton Down type brooch (Hattat type 39) were recovered at Broadbridge (Chi SMR 1254 and 1255 respectively; both 481000 105000), with a further coin was found at Apuldram Farm (Chi SMR 2390; 484200 103500). A quarter stater coin attributed to Atrebatas (Chi SMR 2489; 484000 104000) is likely to be *bona fide*, since the AONB was firmly within the tribal territory of the Atrebatas during the later Iron Age (Cunliffe 1991).

Research questions

Future research should address how the landscape was used in the Iron Age, and whether any evidence of settlement can be identified. Most of the evidence points to the AONB being used for salt making in this period, although there are hints that the true picture may have been more complex – for example the function of Tourner Bury hillfort is not fully understood, or whether the roots of the Fishbourne site extend into the Iron Age, perhaps as a trading post.

There are also unresolved questions about trade and supply in the Iron Age. Was the Harbour a major trading route, and was water transport more important than transport on land?

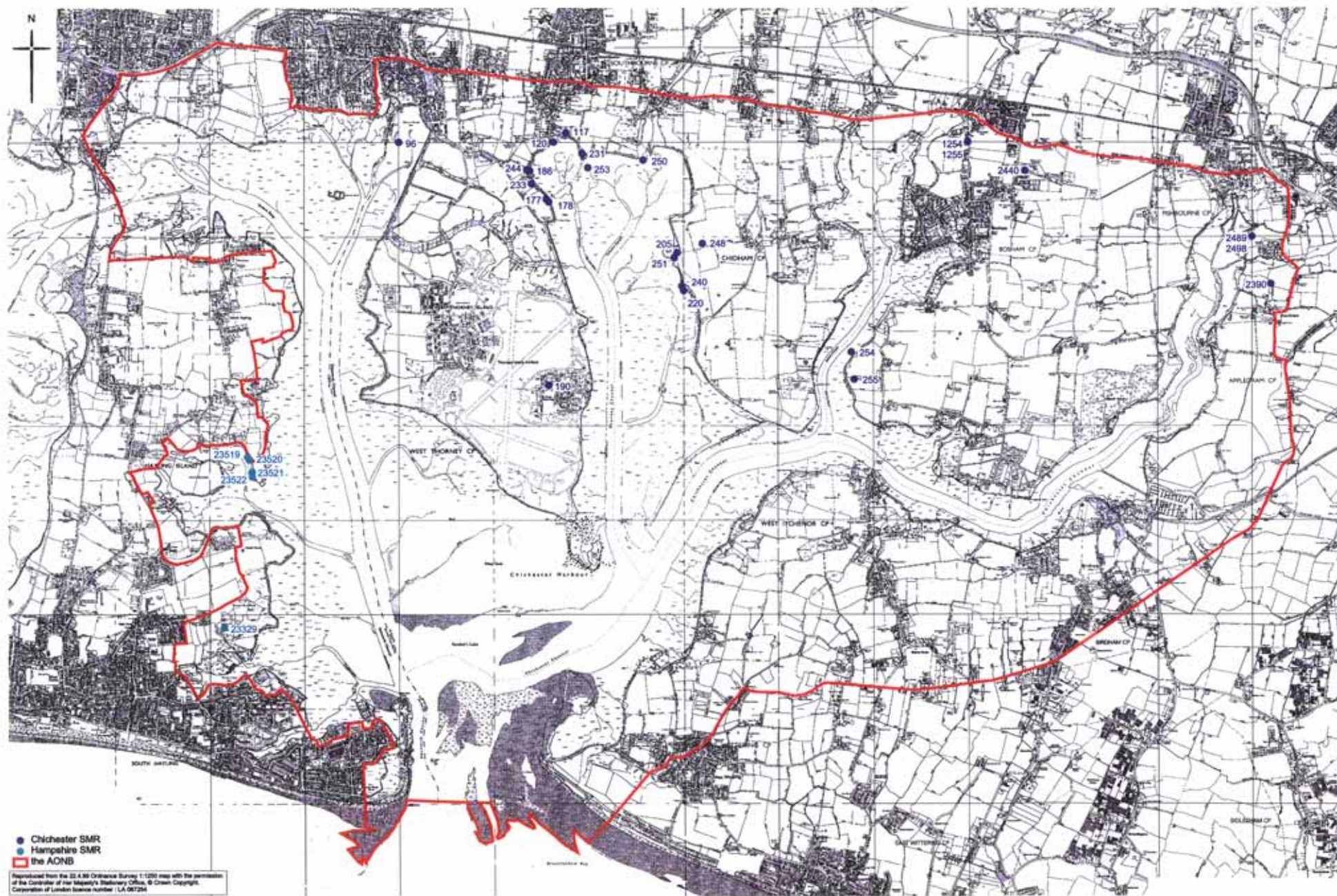


Fig 10 Iron Age period map



Fig 11 Iron Age Tourner Bury fort from the air