

Forty Acre Lane, Harting – first radiocarbon dates

Neolithic, Bronze Age and later site on the crest of the Chalk scarp at SU 766 193. Geophysical surveys followed by excavations by *People of the Heath* team during September and October 2021.

Table of radiocarbon dates (calibrated ranges are rounded outwards to nearest 5 years; gaps in ranges are ignored)

Context	Description	Material & id.	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ‰	^{14}C date BP Lab ref.	Calibrated date cal BC (95.4%) & (68.3%)	Period
Tr 2: 222	oval enclosure ditch: artefact cluster just above primary fill	unburnt bone; <i>bos</i> cervical vertebra (id.278)	-22.2	3293 ± 24 SUERC-105465	1620–1505 1610–1515	Early/Middle Bronze Age transition
Tr 2: 221 obj 23	oval enclosure ditch: just above primary fill	unburnt bone; <i>sus</i> humerus (id.268)	-21.5	3048 ± 24 SUERC-107535	1400–1225 1385–1265	Middle Bronze Age (middle of)
Tr 3: 321	clay fill of pit	unburnt bone; large mammal long bone (id.281)	-	failed GU61146	-	-
Tr 4: 412	oval enclosure ditch: high in primary fill	unburnt bone; ovicaprid tibia (id.277)	-22.1	3058 ± 21 SUERC-105467	1410–1260 1385–1275	Middle Bronze Age (middle of)
Tr 4: 411	oval enclosure ditch: high in primary fill	unburnt bone; <i>bos</i> metacarpal (id.275)	-21.9	3303 ± 24 SUERC-107536	1620–1510 1615–1530	Early/Middle Bronze Age transition
Tr 6: 618	artefact cluster in middle fill of tree- throw/pit	burnt bone; large mammal long bone (id.269)	-15.4	4544 ± 24 SUERC-105468	3370–3100 3365–3125	Middle Neolithic

Main points

- The large oval enclosure ditch is confirmed to be Bronze Age rather than Neolithic. Some evidence from early aerial photographs (Historic England, National Monuments Record) further supports the hypothesis that it enclosed a row of contiguous barrows, 3 or 4 in number.
- The four dates for what is effectively the same stratigraphic horizon in the ditch give two distinct ranges separated by almost 100 years (95% confidence level). In either trench the latest date is within the range 1410–1225 cal BC and, since no later intrusion was observed (e.g. a ditch re-cut), these can be taken to be close to the date of initial digging.
- The earlier two ditch dates are also consistent with one another, 1620–1505 cal BC, and most likely mean that material of this transitional E/MBA date was lying around on the surface allowing some of it to be weathered into the fill of the subsequently cut ditch.
- Although the oval ditch is not Neolithic, we do have confirmation of Neolithic activity from the fill of the large Tr 6 pit-like feature. The radiocarbon-dated bone turns out to be Middle Neolithic. As well as bone, the feature contained pottery flintwork and burnt flint.
- Although the Tr 3 sample failed, it is still suspected that a pit-circle stratified beneath an Early Bronze Age in-situ horizon is later Neolithic. The loss of collagen from that bone sample may be due to the unusual hydrology attested by the calcitic ‘concrete’ in the lower fill of pit [321].

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