

WORKSHEET 5

The Lay of the Land

In this worksheet we explain why Badbury Rings looks like it does. We look at its human history, and see how archaeologists build pictures of people from the past.

This worksheet will take you on a tour of the Rings. You don't have to walk very far, but get ready to use your imagination!

CURRICULUM LINKS

KS1 – Iron Age and Roman history

ACTIVITY

Takes place on Badbury Rings

GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Please stick to the footpaths as much as possible to avoid disturbing the skylarks
- Red Devon cows are said to be very docile

KIT TO TAKE WITH YOU

- ✓ Notepads and pencils
- ✓ Anti-tick repellent

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Thanks to archaeologists, we have some ideas of how Badbury Rings was formed, the people that first lived here, and what happened to them. Early settlers were not able to write down their stories, so archaeologists have pieced their story together by looking at the banks and ditches, coins, arrow heads and other items that have been found on the Rings. They have connected their findings at Badbury with what they have seen

at similar earthworks, such as Hod Hill and Maiden Castle. Archaeologists think these places were not only settlements, but were also used for ceremonial events, and acted as places of safety in times of unrest or war.

You can learn about an excavation at Badbury Rings in 2004 here:

<https://archaeologynationaltrustsw.wordpress.com/2013/12/08/the-conquest-of-badbury-rings/>

WHY DID PEOPLE COME TO BADBURY?

Let's travel right back in history and imagine what this place looked like before the first humans came to live here. Badbury would have been a hill, with trees growing on it. The ground is made up of many round flint pebbles that were deposited here by rivers after the last Ice Age. The lower areas around the hill were made up of chalk, which shows they were originally under the sea for millions of years. See Worksheet 6 for more about the geology of the Rings.

Bronze Age settlers must have recognised that Badbury Hill had some key advantages:

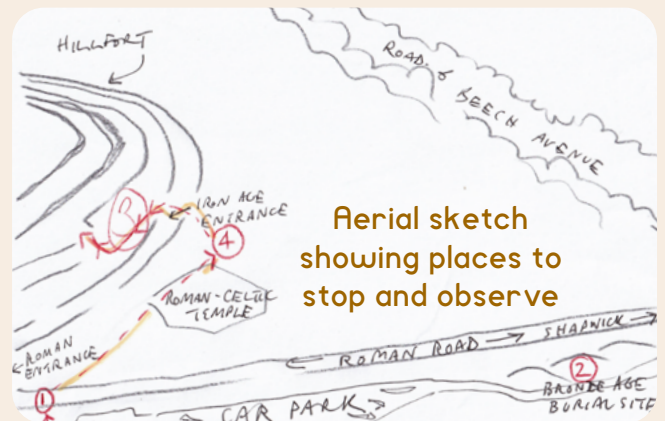
- It was near to the River Stour, a major trade route and source of food and water, connecting to the port at Poole.
- As a hill it provided a lookout point across the Dorset landscape, with views in all directions.
- Chalk was a readily available building material, and there was plenty of it.



Round flint pebbles on top of Badbury Rings, which came to be used as slingshots

UNCOVERING THE PAST: Let's take a tour and see for ourselves!

From the car park walk towards the hillfort...



1. Almost immediately you will cross over a Roman Road. Stop here for a moment. This long straight mound runs towards the Beech Avenue and Shapwick from Old Sarum (Salisbury) direction. It was built by the Romans after 43 AD, when the hillfort was unoccupied.



2. Take a moment to look down towards the Beech Avenue, and spot the **Bronze Age Burial Mounds**. These are probably the oldest features you will see today, built over 3000 years ago. Over 100 barrows have been counted in nearby fields. Have you seen any barrows in other places of Dorset? The same barrows may have been used for hundreds of years, and contain the remains of Romans and Saxons, and Bronze Age people, alongside coins, pottery and other artefacts.

3. Now look towards the Rings... What are they? Why are they here? Who built them?

We see 3 concentric circles, each consisting of a bank and ditch.

This is a manmade structure, built and extended in the Iron Age by the Celtic Durotrige tribe, before the Romans came to Britain in 43 AD. What was going through their minds? It is likely people had heard gruesome stories of the Romans invading from Gaul (Europe). Maybe they built the outer ring as an extra defence in a hurry, using stone tools, mounding up chalk in a great line of cones, which were then levelled out and joined together to form the bank or rampart. When you walk along the top of the outer or middle bank, you can see how the ground undulates, maybe it was not finished in time.

The picture shows that, in 43 AD the banks were much higher, and the ditches much deeper. A tall wooden fence would have run along the top of the banks, deterring intruders. What we see now are banks that have eroded for the last 2000 years due to rain, human footfall and animal grazing.



The Durotrige settlement on Badbury, 43AD, before the Roman invasion

Archaeologists believe the Rings were constructed at different times:

The earliest people may have arrived in the Stone Age, but it is generally agreed that the Bronze Age people, from 1200 BC to 800 BC, built a simple bank and ditch around the top of the hill, using chalk from nearby. A tall wooden fence would have made it feel like a castle, protecting people inside.



Later on, a second bank and ditch was added, and a rectangular area, called a 'barbican'. It is believed this may have been a place for storing cattle.



Finally, in the years before the Romans came, the Durotrige tribe constructed the third, outer bank and ditch to defend the settlement from the invading Roman armies. This bank is thought to have been 15 meters high at the time, with a wooden fence on the top. The Romans would have had to climb up large scree slopes of chalk to reach the top, whilst being pelted by slingshot stones, spears and arrows.



4. Now Go to the Iron Age Gateway. Are you ready for some military action?

The original Iron Age gates are not located where you might expect at the entrance we normally use today. Follow the outer rampart round to the right and you will find a gap in the bank. As you go, imagine a solid wooden fence at the top of the bank, with a deep ditch in front, and then, when you arrive at the gap, imagine a tall, wooden double gate blocking the entrance.

We believe the Celts were great military strategists, they put themselves in the shoes, (well, sandals), of the Romans, and made it difficult for them to attack.

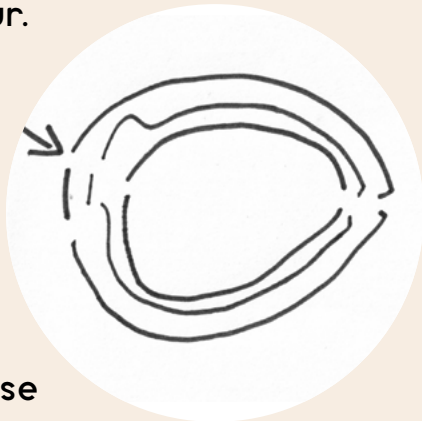
To get an idea of what it might have been like, start at the outer gate, and walk up through the 3 entrances. Imagine how the high banks with their wooden fences and gates might have looked. Between each one the attackers would have to turn to the left and move some distance down a narrow space, maybe only 2 or 3 at a time. Imagine being in this space, pelted with stones and arrows from above. You may get some protection from the metal shield in your left hand, but you would be exposed on your right-hand side, and the spear in your right

hand would be difficult to use, as you would have to twist your whole body around. All around you dead and injured bodies would be mounting up in the ditch, restricting your attack. Despite the efforts of the Durotrige people, it is thought the Romans conquered Badbury with ease, before going on to capture Hod Hill and Maiden Castle, and other Celtic hillforts.

5. Badbury in Roman Times

The Romans constructed long straight roads, Badbury was situated at the crossroads of two main trade routes that led to Dunrovia (Dorchester) to the West, via Vindocladia (Shapwick), to Old Sarum (Salisbury) to the East, Ilchester northwards, and South to a port at Poole Harbour.

It is thought the Romans created a new entrance on the Rings, the one we use today.



After the Roman capture in 43 AD it is thought Badbury became unoccupied, returning to its natural grassland state, but home to the ghosts of many brave Celts. The Romans stayed in Britain for the next 400 years, then, in 410 AD, they returned home to defend Rome.



Map drawings showing road building, from Iron Age tracks, 700BC - 43AD (top), to Roman Road systems (bottom) 43 - 410AD



Schools: Would you like a guide to show you around Badbury or even come to your school? If so, please contact David Smith, who lives very near Badbury. David was warden for Badbury Rings for many years, and has all sorts of artefacts he has found there. Contact details on the back page.