

## *Sellindge, Grove Park Archaeology*

*An archaeological excavation was carried out by Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) at Grove Park, Sellindge, Kent, during 2022 and 2023. The excavation was undertaken in response to recommendations from Kent County Council following archaeological evaluations undertaken in 2022.*

*Archaeological excavations have revealed the presence of vast Bronze Age barrow cemetery, which appears to have close parallels with similar sites (including those that have been designated as nationally important), which are also on the c.70m high promontories on the south side of the East Stour river (to the south of the site). It appears that potential burial mounds were removed and the area was turned into agricultural land in medieval period; however there was one central burial in one of the two double-ring barrows.*

*There was also significant occupation on site from the Late Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age and Roman Period. Probable agricultural and settlement activity comprising field boundary ditches, pits, enclosures, structures and a trackway. Funerary practises appeared to take place in the west of the site during the Mid to Late Bronze Age and Early Romano- British period, before dwindling in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, the site being abandoned probably in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The agricultural activity resumed in 13<sup>th</sup> Century and persisted until Post Medieval and modern Periods.*

*Phase 2 excavations were carried out primarily within internal road easements and have exposed an angular Bronze Age enclosure housing small structure of yet unknown purpose. Strip and Map carried out within southern extent exposed continuation of Roman rectilinear enclosures, a kiln and a Bronze Age roundhouse; a part of suspected settlement of that date demarcated from the south by a massive boundary ditch.*

*Another, highly unexpected Barrow was exposed at south-western end of Phase 2. This feature comprised relatively small in diameter but fairly wide and deep ring ditch cutting through an extinguished spring head. What was the reasoning behind placing funerary monument within sporadically active spring? Partially, the answer might be found in underlying geology.*

*The site is located on the southern side of a small ridge comprised of Folkestone Formation and Sandgate Formation (sands), the southern slope of which, for the most part, is covered by Head (silty*

clay). A small brook runs to the east and then south east of the site and is recorded as containing peat and further more extensive peats are recorded north of Sellindge and north of Brook Lane. The site is mapped as supporting an isolated area of pelo-calcareous alluvial gley soils of the Park Gate Association area of (Allen et al. 1983; Jarvis 1984). The walkover reconnaissance showed the top of the ridge (supporting the main ring ditches) was a fine sand / coarse silt, possibly of loessic origin, or well-weathered fine-grained Folkestone and Sandgate Formation (Area 4), with the southern slope (Area 1) being a sticky silty clay Head on the surface.

It is clear that the main ring ditches are sited on the ridge but not on its apex. They are located just below the crest of the ridge clearly overlooking the land to the south, and not that which falls away more steeply to the north. They are constructed to be seen from the adjacent south slope or from a distance to the south, but cannot be seen from the base of the slope. This may have implications for the location of any contemporaneous settlement.

The “sand” recorded of the geology is coarse silt (or fine sand) rather than sand and is located on the ridge and may be, or have a loessic component. This may have an implication for local groundwater drainage. The stream to the east of the site is deeply incised about 1m into the local geology with a well-defined very local valley floodplain. The presence of deep stratified Holocene deposits in this valley immediately to the east of the site is undefined, but not obviously present.

Central and western extent of Area 4 (4b) containing two Bronze Age ring barrows and series of Roman rectilinear enclosures was designated for preservation in-situ. Two located the most to the west ring barrows were preserved under recently reconstructed mounds which will become a permanent part of a future park and will be accompanied by two heritage lecterns providing information for the public about recent archaeological investigations and how they relate to similar discoveries in the surrounding area. Quinn Estates by agreeing to undertake this reconstruction project are significantly contributing to the dissemination of the results of archaeological investigation and will create another worth-visit heritage-related place in the County. It will also help with the integration and will add a character to the newly build housing estate in the Village.

A brief overlook video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab6dkg70nFc>

Peter Cichy/ SWAT Archaeology

20/11/2024

