

A re-survey of three barrows on King's Ridge, Frensham Common, Frensham, Surrey

Introduction

Following a heathland fire and minor damage by a bulldozed emergency firebreak in August 2010, the group of three barrows, centred at SU 85333 40642 on the King's Ridge, were surveyed at the request of English Heritage in order to record the state of the monuments.

The three barrows (NMR No SU 84 SE 17; part of scheduled monument no 20159; HER no 1604) form a linear group with a further barrow lying approximately 50m to the north and a low mound, probably the remains of a barrow, some 350m further north again (Graham, Graham, Farr & Branch, *Surrey Archaeol Collect* **94**, 2008, 181-189), all on the crest of the steep north/south sand ridge between Frensham Great and Little Ponds. In 1996 the three barrows and the one immediately to the north were surveyed by the RCHME in advance of work to repair damage caused by horses and walkers eroding the mounds. This work involved capping the mounds, though not the southernmost one, with sand and laying gravel along the line of the paths that cross the crests of the barrows (fig 1). The RCHME produced contour and hachured plans (fig 2, left) and a report. By 2010 the gravel paths were again eroding away and the mounds being damaged by the pressure of public use of the Common. Further disturbance to the barrows was caused by an emergency firebreak that was bulldozed between the southern two mounds to control the spread of the fire (fig 3).



Fig 1 View of one of the mounds being capped with sand, 1996

Description

The RCHME report includes a description of each of the barrows as they were in 1996 and there have been only minor changes since then. The repair work has changed the profile of the middle and northern mounds, though some of the capping has now been lost, and some of the paths appear to have moved slightly in the intervening 14 years. Otherwise the southern barrow, which was not affected by the repairs, seems to have reduced slightly in height since 1996, probably as a result of

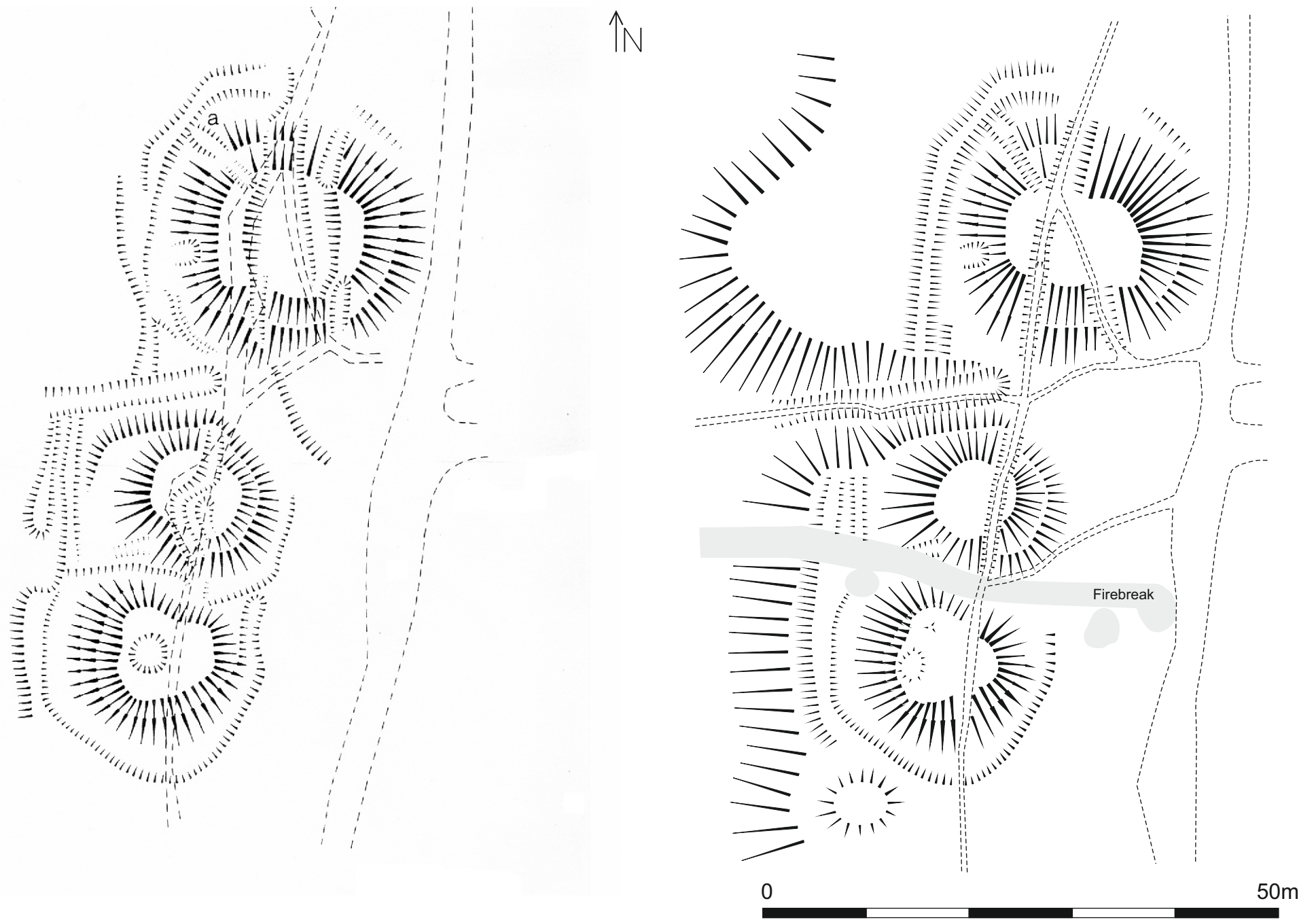


Fig 2 Barrow group on King's Ridge, Frensham Common. Hachure plan by RCHME 1996 (left) 2010 survey (right).

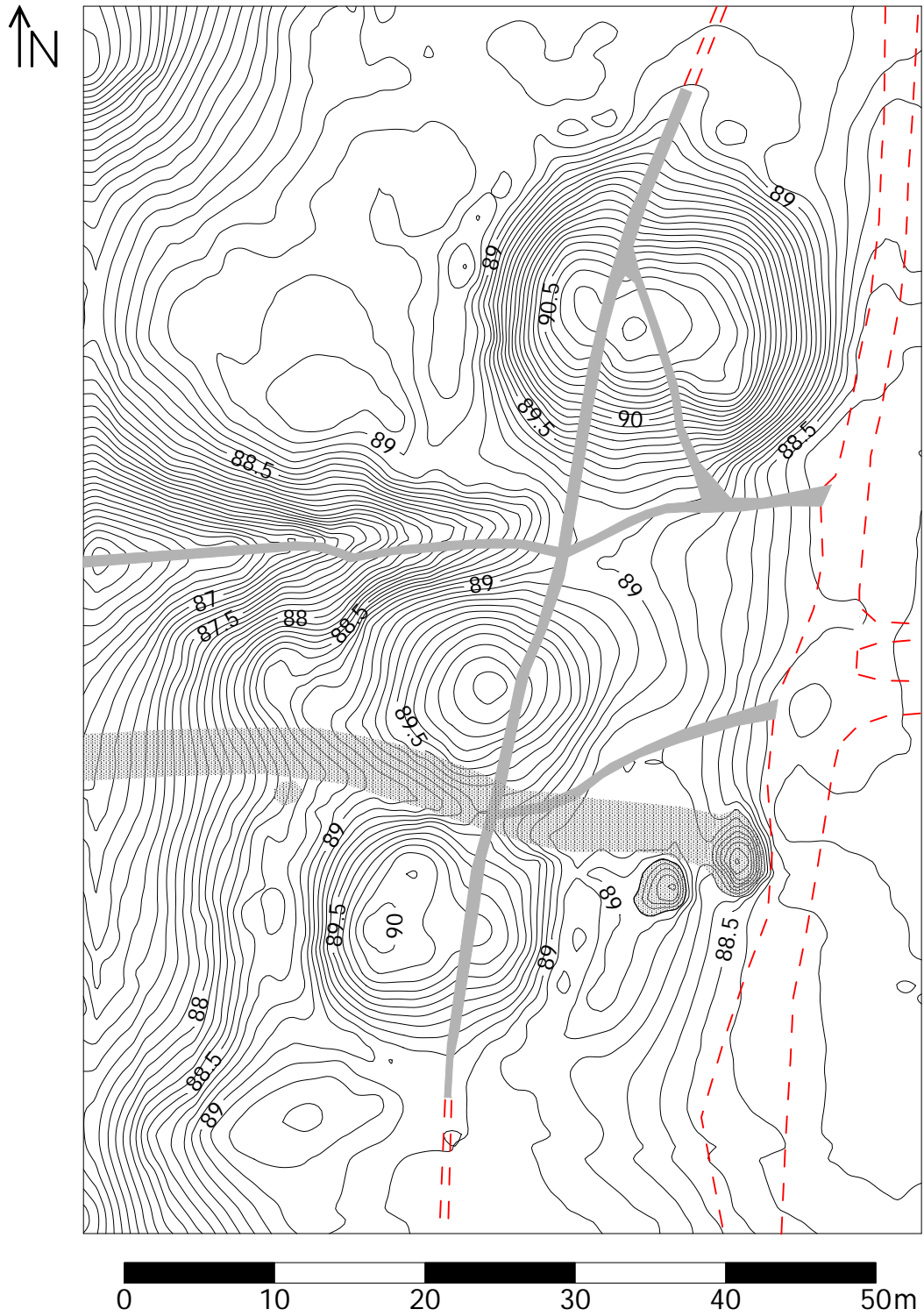


Fig 3 Barrow group on King's Ridge, Frensham Common, Surrey (centred SU 85333 40642)
 Contour plan, paths shown in red. Damage by paths in grey tone. Damage by recent firebreak in grey stipple.

further erosion. The bulldozed firebreak has removed a skim of soil from the lowest part of southern flank of the middle mound and has removed some of the bank and ditch associated with the barrows and shown on the 1996 survey (fig 3). It has also left three mounds of spoil, one on the west flank of the southern mound and two at the eastern end of the firebreak.

The current survey shows that two southern mounds seem to form a pair and to have been surrounded by a ditch with a section of outer scarp bank surviving on the west flank of the southern mound and possibly also to the west of the middle mound (fig 3). The ground has been very disturbed by erosion gullies on this side and it is, however, difficult to be absolutely certain of the original form of the monument. To the east there is no sign of a counter scarp bank, but the line of the ditch is clear as it passes around and to the east of the southern mound. It is, however, lost to the north beyond this point, but perhaps once continued to enclose the middle mound as well, if the evidence on the west flank is correctly interpreted above.

The northern mound similarly shows clear evidence of a surrounding ditch, again with traces of a counter scarp bank to the west. Whether this linked with the pair of barrows to the south is uncertain, but the survey does seem to show that on the west side the ditch may have continued southwards rather than swinging around the south flank of the mound as might have been expected. If so, this would have linked the three barrows together, but the evidence is very slight and has largely been removed by the gully that is eroding up the slope at this point between the two barrows. Elsewhere there are a number of old paths in the vicinity that have been abandoned but have left faint grooves in the ground surface.

The one other feature that was picked up by the current survey was that there is a low fourth mound under the heather in line with and to the south of the three barrows. This is probably a natural feature but could conceivably be the remains of a fourth barrow.

K D Graham
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Addendum

In December 2010 permission was give to excavate a test trench over the fourth mound, which turned out to be entirely natural.