

## THE U.B.S.S. AND THE SCHEDULING OF MENDIP BARROWS

by

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### ABSTRACT

The scheduling of round barrows on central Mendip as ancient monuments in 1929 may have been instigated by Ethelbert Horne partly to protect them from U.B.S.S. excavation (pre-Taylor) in the 1920s.

Among the Bulleid family papers in the Somerset Record Office at Taunton (ref. DD/DGLI) is a letter from Father Ethelbert Horne to Dr Arthur Bulleid from Downside Abbey, dated 8 October 1924, which reads:

My dear Doctor

I am rather anxious to get a batch of barrows scheduled, if for no other reason than to prevent the Bristol University young men, digging into them.

Could you pick out those on Blackdown and at Priddy, as a beginning? Let us start with the largest & most tempting specimens, nearest to the Bristol direction. You will probably know which are most attractive in the Burrington direction or at Priddy or Blackdown. As soon as we can get some scheduled, we can write to the University and say that as many are now scheduled, they had better write to Taunton to find out before beginning work. This would give us a hold over their performances.

Father Horne (1858-1952) was then chief correspondent for Somerset to H.M. Office of Works (forerunner of English Heritage), a position which he held until at least 1930, the date of his last annual report on 'Ancient monuments in Somerset' (Horne, 1930).

Dr Arthur Bulleid (1862-1951) had a passion for Mendip barrows, as shown by his paper 'Chambered long barrows in North Somerset' (Bulleid, 1942) and by his quarto notebook 'Somersetshire Barrows' in the Somerset County Record Office at Taunton (DD/GDL 43). He never got round to publishing the round barrows, but the information from his notebook is probably absorbed in the U.B.S.S. records and in Grinsell 1971.

The U.B.S.S. was founded in 1919. Until 1922 their activities were limited to caves; but from 1923 onwards they began to excavate round barrows on central Mendip. From the first their main work was on the Tynning's Farm group (T. 10-14; LVG's CHEDDAR 1-5). The published sections (Read, 1924, 1925) suggest that the group was then in pasture, and that the excavation was not justified as a rescue dig in the face of plough erosion. The same applies to their excavation of barrow T. 5 (BURRINGTON 1) on Blackdown, where their excavation was exhaustively re-worked between 1950 and 1956 by Dr Herbert Taylor ('Porthos') whose relevant notes are in the U.B.S.S. Museum.

Father Horne's concern was therefore understandable. It may have been through his influence that the Somerset Archaeological . . . Society appointed a sub-committee during the winter of 1924-5 to 'draw up a schedule of monuments for the information of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments' (*Proc* . . . 70 for 1924, xvi). This could only mean to recommend sites for scheduling. By 1929 the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments had taken action to the extent of scheduling no less than about a hundred round barrows on central Mendip (listed by Horne, 1930). Horne himself excavated the Pool Farm round barrow (WEST HARPTREE 8, T. 65) in 1930 in advance of its destruction by ploughing (Horne, 1931), but failed to notice several foot-

carvings on the southern cist-slab, which the writer observed in 1956 (Grinsell, 1957). The members of the U.B.S.S. appear to have shown little further interest in barrow excavation, as distinct from recording, after about 1925, apart from the very careful work of Dr Taylor noted above.

The Ashen Hill and Priddy Nine groups were not scheduled until July 1933. Between 1935 and 1937 John Jarman, then a master at Millfield School, Street, was writing his novel *Priddy Barrows* (1944), which depicts Captain Nelson Hayes, headmaster of a local school who spent his spare time digging into round barrows in his area. It remains an open question whether these barrows were scheduled in 1933 to curb the activities of such a local menace (Grinsell, 1987).

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