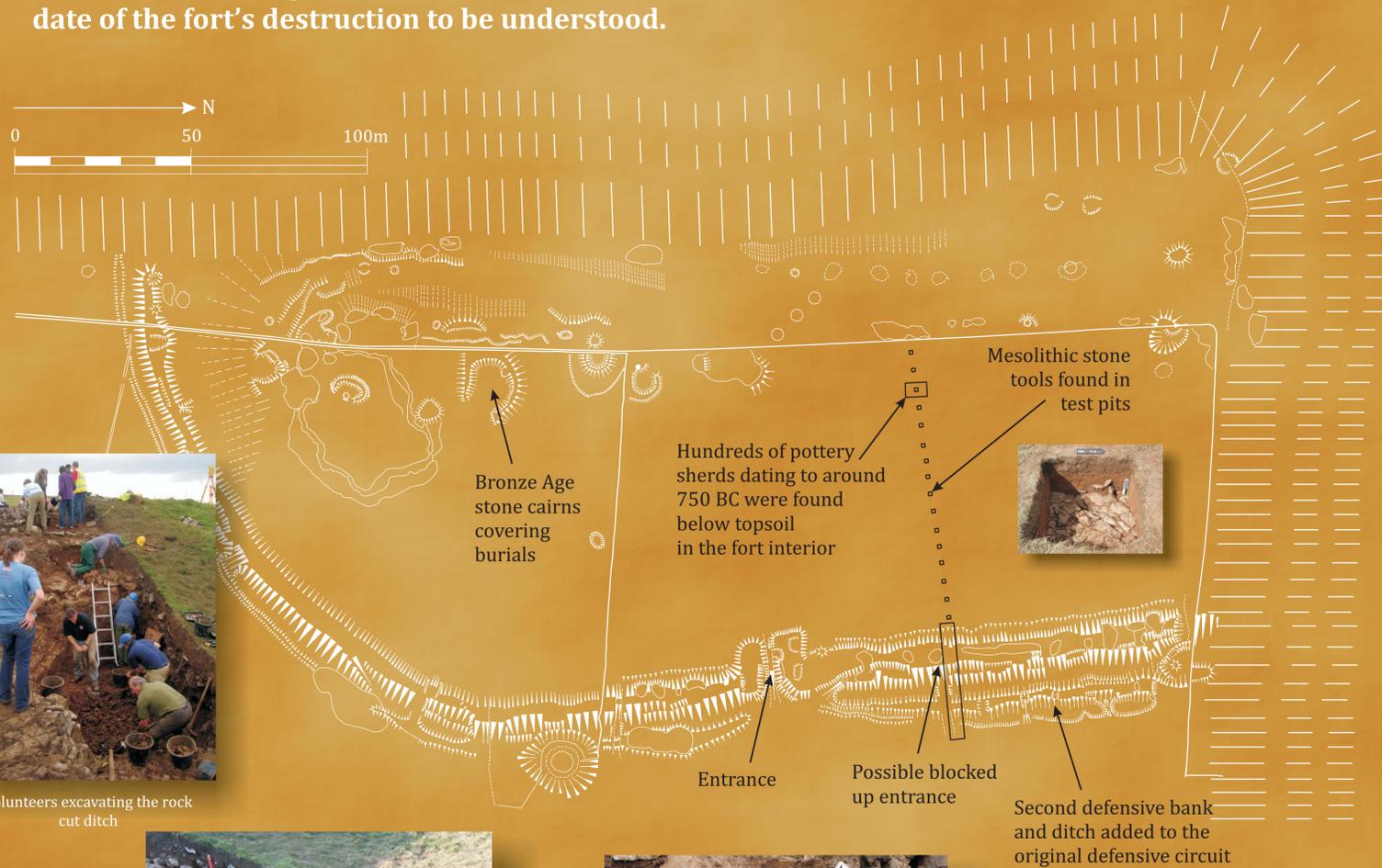


FIN COP

Fortress on the Hill...

On the crest of the high hilltop ahead lie the remains of an Iron Age hillfort. The remains visible today exist as a series of grassed-over banks and ditches; excavation has shown that the ditch was rock-cut and up to 2m deep, and the banks are what remains of massive stone ramparts that were probably 2m or more high. The site was strengthened with a further line of stone wall on its south side sometime after its initial construction. The hillfort then appears to have been attacked and the stone walls deliberately pushed into the rock-cut ditches. The skeleton of a woman accompanied by an infant was found flung into the ditch among the wall debris. Radiocarbon dating of her bones to around 300 BC has allowed the date of the fort's destruction to be understood.



Volunteers excavating the rock cut ditch



Section across the ditch fill which contained remains of the collapsed wall



Pelvis and leg bones of the female skeleton found in the ditch fill



Recording pottery fragments within the hillfort

Excavating the Fort

The excavations were carried out by Longstone Local History Group and volunteers from local villages along with children from Longstone School led by professional archaeologists from Archaeological Research Services Ltd. The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and was supported by the Peak District National Park Authority, local landowners and English Heritage. A site diary was kept throughout the work and a film was made of the project which can be viewed at www.greatlongstone.net. You can find out more about the site by visiting the project website at www.archaeologicalresearchservices.com/projects/fincop and there is a leaflet available at local outlets.

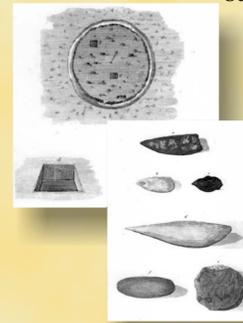


Over 200 people were involved in the excavations which lasted for three weeks during July-August 2009. The site was investigated using a number of methods included archival research, geophysical survey, earthworks survey and the excavations detailed here.



A High Place for the Dead

Around 2000 BC, in the Early Bronze Age, the high status members of local farming communities were buried in rock-cut graves on the highest point of the hilltop. The bodies were placed with pottery vessels containing food and drink for their journey into the afterlife. The graves were covered with piles of stones, known as 'cairns' so that they stood out for miles around on the crest of the hill. It was much later, during the Iron Age that the fort was occupied around this burial ground.



Mesolithic Hunters

During excavation of test pits inside the hillfort hundreds of stone chippings resulting from stone tool manufacture were discovered. These artefacts were mostly made from chert - a local rock that is found within the limestone - and was specially quarried at Fin Cop. The tools are all made on specially prepared blades and include barbs for hunting weapons as well as scrapers and piercers for working hides. These types of tools are specific to the Mesolithic period and are probably around 10,000 years old.



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The hillfort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument on private land and should not be visited without permission.