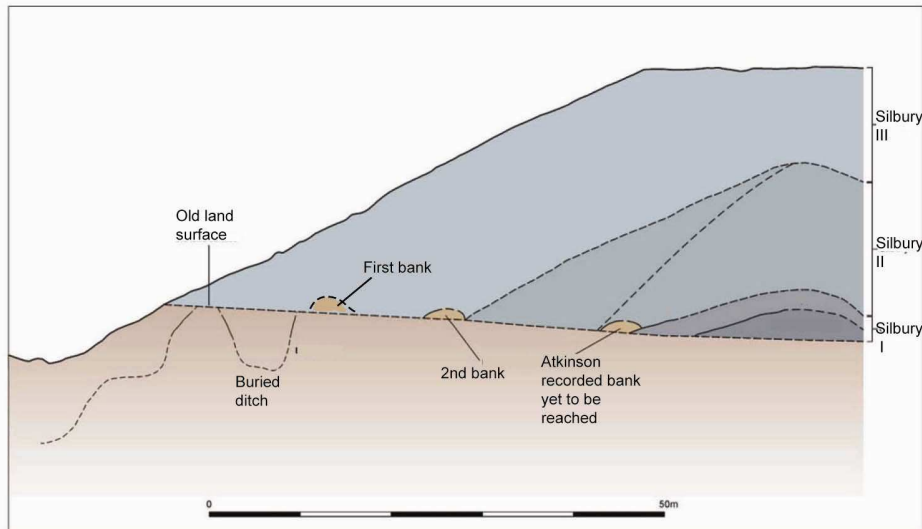


SILBURY HILL CONSERVATION PROJECT

Update 7: progress for 25th – 29th June 2007



Section through Silbury showing the location of buried features

We are now about 50 metres into the Atkinson Tunnel.

After the discovery of the bank (bank 2), mentioned in last week's update, archaeological survey work continued on this feature. The tops of this bank were surveyed in both elevations and it is interesting to note that the west elevation is lower than that of the east elevation. This lower elevation could suggest that the bank is coming to an end, although further work is required to establish if this is indeed the case.

Neolithic roots have been identified a metre below the top of the bank. The growth of vegetation indicates a period of stasis where the bank has been left for a period of time, before being covered by the construction of Silbury III. These roots have been well preserved and samples have been taken for experts to study.

Atkinson's interpretation that this bank lay on the perimeter of Silbury II and post dates the main mound construction has been confirmed. The construction dates of these two construction phases are likely to be revealed through information gained from sampling.



The old ground surface is clearly visible as a thin seam in the side of the tunnel (above).

The Merewether Tunnel has now fully joined the Atkinson Tunnel. The original ground surface is now at waist height allowing a better study of this level. There is a layer of silty clay, the original ground surface, and above this a 'working' surface of churned up material, which contain a number of depressions which have been tentatively identified as footprints. There is, however, no way of proving this.



The chalk above the reddy brown fill in the picture above is 1970s collapse caused by the lack of roadstone fill beyond this point.

The roadstone fill has now begun to trail off, and we expect to have removed all of this by early this week. Once the roadstone has come to an end it may be that the Atkinson Tunnel contains a significant amount of collapse dating from post 1970 when the Tunnel

was closed. This material has not moved significantly and will have only dropped from above, this ensures that any finds can be more precisely located. This material will be of particular interest to the Finds Team as it will not have been contaminated with the roadstone.

Finds and Environmental News

The conjunction of the Merewether Tunnel with the Atkinson Tunnel has meant that as the material between the two thinned, the old collapses have fallen through the struts meaning that the Finds Team have had slightly more material to process than usual.

To date three pieces of animal bone have been found within the tunnel. This week these fragments were studied by an English Heritage zooarchaeologist. The three bone fragments have been identified as two pieces of rib and a scapula (shoulder blade). Ribs are not diagnostic elements for assigning species, and it has therefore been impossible to say anything more than these bones have come from a large mammal. The scapula appears to be from a deer or domesticated pig, as it is too small to be from a wild boar. Unfortunately the key diagnostic area has been broken off in antiquity.



One of the Finds Team measures a larger piece of antler.

Further to the bone more antler has been found; mainly small pieces as before, although two larger pieces have also been recovered. Late Neolithic flint flakes continue to be found.

Other News



This week also saw a visit to the Project by local schools for an education day. They learned about the hill, its history and this conservation project, as well as the finds and environmental processes. The Finds Team demonstrated how they search through mound material for artefacts, and how samples are treated. The children each had a go at sifting through pre-processed material and succeeded in finding the items the Team had deposited. This outreach work is an important contribution to achieving the aims and objectives of the project, as well as encouraging wider participation and involvement in British archaeology.