

Talk on Thursday December 11th - Living with the White Horse: Excavations at Ridgeway Hill forts

By Professor Gary Lock.

The talk focused on the 3 main hill forts in our vicinity i.e. White Horse Hill, Segsbury and Alfred's Castle

Starting with Uffington Castle hill fort, it was constructed in the 7th century BC and was remodelled in the 4th Century. There is evidence of the fort being used for ceremonial purposes in association with the White Horse. The hill fort was re-used in Romano- British times, and used for burial. The mythology surrounding the White Horse has made a popular visitor attraction over the years.

Segsbury Castle is approx. 8 miles further along the Ridgeway with a ditch and ramparts with 4 Gateways. It had roundhouses dating from the 2nd Century BC but had fallen into disuse by Roman times. Excavation carried out in the 1990's suggests that it was a communal centre for various activities such as the sale of livestock, mainly sheep, and religious ceremonies.

Last on the list was Alfred's Castle, just south of the Ridgeway path at Ashdown. It had a large enclosure started around the 6th Century BC. The hill fort was established within a series of Bronze Age ditches and there has been evidence of continuous human occupation. In the 1st Century AD a Romano –British farmhouse was built within the abandoned prehistoric enclosure.

Although all the sites are described as hill forts, they were all very different in shape, size and construction, and in the way they appear to have been used.