

## **BARROW MILLS.**

Sussex Bronze Age barrows reused as windmill-steads.

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A number of Bronze Age barrows were later reused as mill mounds or windmill-steads mainly in the medieval period. The roundness of barrows was adequate for a windmill to be placed upon them. There are a number of examples throughout Britain, but the Bronze Age barrows at Mill Barrows at Beauworth in Hampshire may not have been associated with a windmill. The name could have derived either from the Anglo-Saxon “mylen beorh” (mill barrow) or an Anglo-Saxon name Maegla.

It seems that only the bowl barrows (the most numerous of their types) were used as windmill-steads. These windmills would have been open trestle and sunken post mills. In the case of many Bronze Age barrows there is a dip at their centre. This is usually due to either antiquarians or partial excavations by archaeologists. However, some could be due to where a windmill once stood.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries during excavations of some barrows, stone foundations and timber structure remains of post mills were found. These were not identified as mill remains until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Charles Monkman was one of the first to discuss some of these cruciform structures found in East Yorkshire. L.V. Grinsell studied about 10,000 barrows during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has stated, which ones were later reused as windmill-steads and some possible cases.

Some examples of mill barrows in Sussex are at Houghton, Bury Hill, Parham, Glynde (2), Firlie (3), Beddingham (2), Summer Down in Saddlescombe, Piddinghoe, Stoke Down at West Stoke, Willingdon Hill and on Rookery Hill at Bishopstone. There is little information about most of these windmills as most of them came out of use centuries ago, but some of the later 18<sup>th</sup> century mills may have been built on the same site. Below are a few of the Sussex barrows, which later became windmill-steads.

### **Beddingham Hill.** (OS Grid Ref TQ 453 060)

Two of the Bronze Age barrows on Beddingham Hill later became windmill-steads. A windmill was marked on the Spanish Armada map of 1587 as “Beringham mille” and also on John Norden’s map of 1595, John Speed’s map of 1610 and Richard Budgeon’s map of 1724, and the OS map of 1813. It was situated on the hill just north of the South Downs Way.

There are no records of the mill after 1813 and it probably fell out of use by then. A mound where it once stood marks the site today. This is marked on the modern OS Explorer maps as “Mill Mound”. This may have been one of the windmills, which used a Bronze Age barrow for its base.

### **Bishopstone.** (OS Grid Ref TQ 467 008)

A group of five bowl barrows exist on Rookery Hill, which date from about 1600 BC. They form a south-east to north-west alignment. The south-eastern barrow is the largest

of them, measuring 18 metres in diameter and one metre in height. A ditch surrounds it. The second barrow going northwards was used as a windmill-stead in the Middle Ages. There is a wide hollow in the centre of the barrow where the windmill once stood. The medieval windmill at Bishopstone is one of the earliest recorded in Sussex. .

**Bury Hill.** (OS Grid Ref TQ 002 122)

A Bronze Age barrow on Bury Hill later became a windmill-stead, but this has since been completely ploughed out. It is situated on the hill west of the A29 and north of the South Downs Way. Medieval pottery was found on the site, which may be associated with the windmill. There is a very slight dip on the site today. A watermill and windmill are entered under Bury in Schedule 2 of the 1801 Defence Schedules.

**Firle.** (OS Grid Ref TQ 486 059)

There were three Bronze Age barrows on the South Downs at Firle, which later became windmill-steads. The largest of these barrows where one of the windmills stood is situated on the summit of the hill at Firle Beacon. The windmill is marked on maps from pre 1587 to 1783. It is marked on Richard Budgeon's map of 1724 as "Firle Windmill". This was also the site of a beacon for the Spanish Armada in 1588. The barrow on the South Downs west of Firle Beacon was also reused as a windmill-stead. This barrow has a hollow at its centre.

**Glynde.** (OS Grid ref TQ 447 097)

On Glynde Hill north of Mount Caburn are the sites of five barrows. These have been ploughed out, but one is much disturbed with a hollow. The latter barrow later became a windmill-stead in medieval times. A windmill was mentioned at Glynde in the Archbishop of Canterbury's customals of the Manor of South Malling 1285 to Roger atte Wyke Miller.

During investigations of these barrows in the 1980s, pottery dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and French Burr millstone fragments has been found. This revealed the site of the windmill referred to in a lease of 1576. A windmill was marked on John Norden's map of 1595 and John Speed's map of 1610. It was gone by the 18<sup>th</sup> century and stood on the hill to the north-east of Mount Caburn.

**Houghton, The Mill Ball.** (OS Grid Ref TQ 00 114)

The Mill Ball at Houghton near Arundel was once a Bronze Age bowl barrow, which dates from the Middle to Late Bronze Age period. It is situated on the crest of the South Downs just south of Bury Hill, east of a footpath and west of the A29 main road. The site is represented by a slight mound and is a scheduled ancient monument. This bowl barrow was later reused as a mound for a windmill.

Bronze Age, Roman and medieval pottery was found on the site. The latter may have been associated with the windmill. In Sussex Archaeological Collections (SAC) Vol 75 states, "upon which it is stated a windmill once stood, but no field name confirms it". Simmons states "a likely spot upon which a mill would have been built". The site today is marked on some maps as "The Mill Ball".

**Stoke Down, West Stoke.** (OS Grid Ref SU 831 096)

The bowl barrow on Stoke Down is situated on the hill to the west of the Neolithic flint mines. It is 18 metres in diameter and 0.8 metres in height. It has a large hollow at its centre and traces of a surrounding ditch were visible in the 1930s. This barrow was later used as a windmill-stead in the Middle Ages. It has been reported that the windmill was a three legged one.

**Summer Down, Saddlescombe.** (OS Grid Ref TQ 269 110)

There are three Bronze Age barrows on Summer Down running in a north-east to south-west alignment. The north-eastern and central barrows show a cruciform cross in their centres where windmills once stood. In SAC Vol 57 states “the cross-shaped excavations on 2 of the tumuli are of note. Its been expressed that these mark the sites of foundations of windmills”. The Knights Templars built a windmill at Saddlescombe in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The location of this mill is not known and it could well have been one of the barrow mills, possibly the central one.

**Possible sites.** There could be other windmills in Sussex, which may have used Bronze Age barrows for their bases. Medieval windmills, which were erected on top of hills, may well have been built on barrows. One such case could be Highdown north-west of Worthing where the mill mound looks as if it may have once been a barrow. The windmill dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but it could be standing on the earlier windmills mentioned in Norman and medieval times at Ecclesden and Goring. Other possible barrow sites on Highdown may also have been medieval windmill-steads.

Another case may have been at Broadwater whose site is at the north-western end of Hill Barn Golf Course where a slight mound still marks it. This windmill dates from 1780, but it could be standing on the site of the earlier Greenwood Mill mentioned in Broadwater Manor dating to 1300 and the later one mentioned in Offington Manor in 1418. The slight mound may well have been a Bronze Age barrow.

**References.**

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**Some Barrow Mills in Sussex. Photographs by Alex Vincent**



**Rookery Hill, Bishopstone**



**The Mill Ball, Houghton**



**Firle Beacon, Firle**



**Stoke Down, West Stoke**



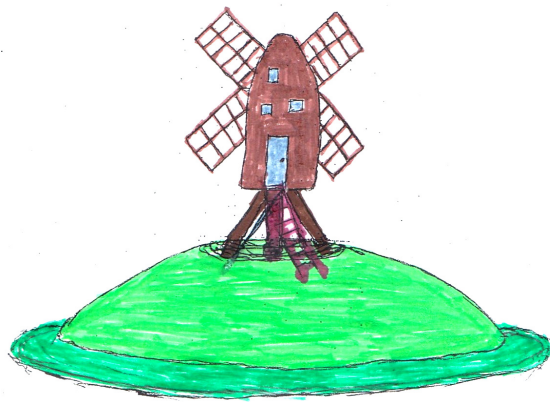
**Summer Down, Saddlescombe**



**Bury Hill, Bury**



**Site of Highdown Windmill. The medieval mills could well be on the same site. The mill mound may have been a Bronze Age barrow**



**What a medieval barrow mill may have looked like  
Sketch by Alex Vincent 2023**