

LAND USE HISTORY

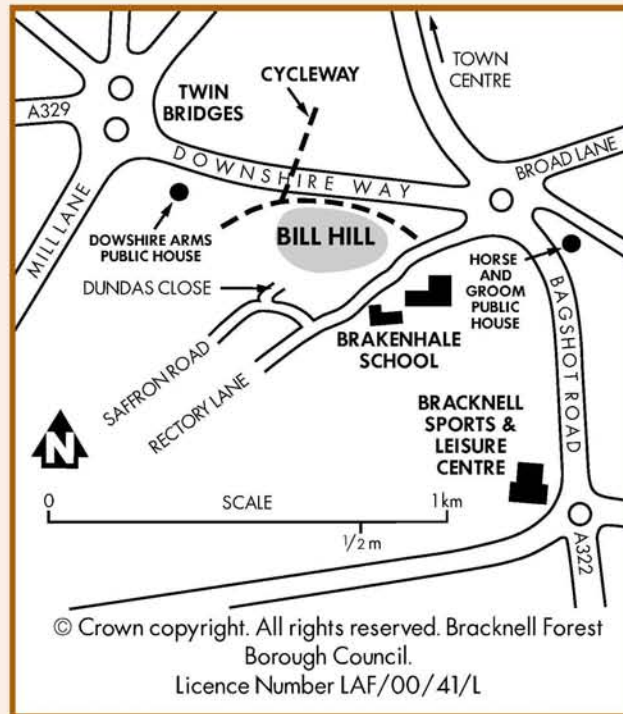
Samples taken from the old ground surface sealed beneath the mound can tell us how the land was used before the construction of the barrow. Samples from the barrow ditch can give us information on the period since it was dug. Finally, a careful study of the burial mound itself provides us with valuable information about the people who built the round barrows.

OTHER EARTHWORKS

As well as the round barrow, several linear banks are visible on the hill. These are probably old field boundaries, identified on an estate map of the area dated 1757, though it is possible they may be even older. These boundaries certainly disappeared before the Tithe, compiled by the Church Commissioners for church tax assessment, was drawn up in 1841.



Beech



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Acknowledgement

Bracknell Forest Borough Council would like to thank the Berkshire County Archaeologist and the East Berkshire Archaeological Survey for their help in researching this leaflet.

How to get there: Bill Hill is about a quarter of a mile south of Bracknell rail station, very close to the roundabout junction with Downshire Way (A322) and Church Road (A3095). The site's precise location is between Downshire Way and Rectory Lane. There are no parking facilities but Bill Hill can easily be approached on foot and cycle - a cycle way runs along the foot of the hill. The main entrance is in Rectory Lane but there is also access from Downshire Way and Dundas Close, off Saffron Road.

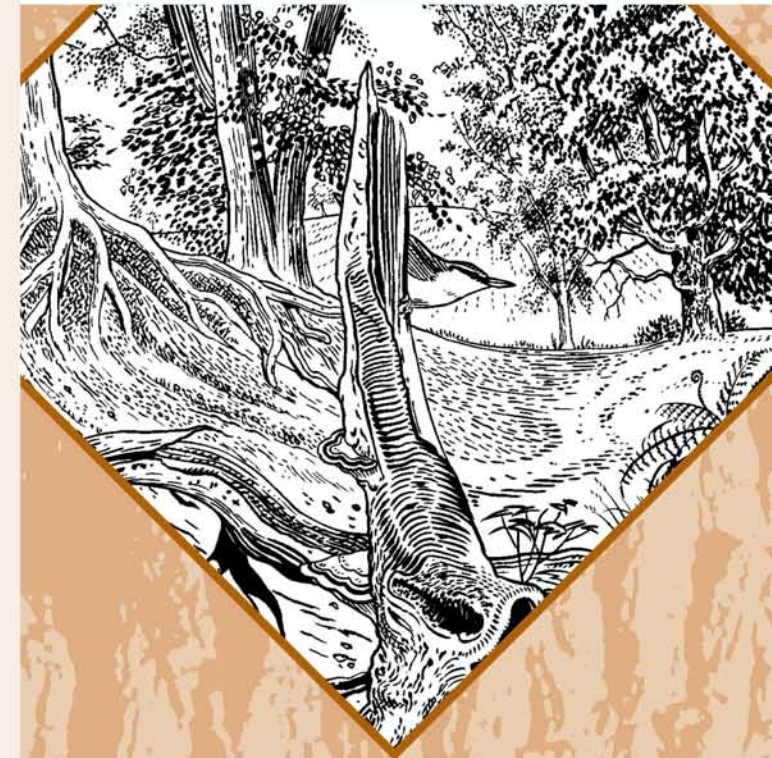
Leisure Services
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Time Square Market Street
Bracknell Berkshire RG12 1LR
Tel: 01344 354441

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BRACKNELL FOREST BILL HILL ANCIENT MONUMENT



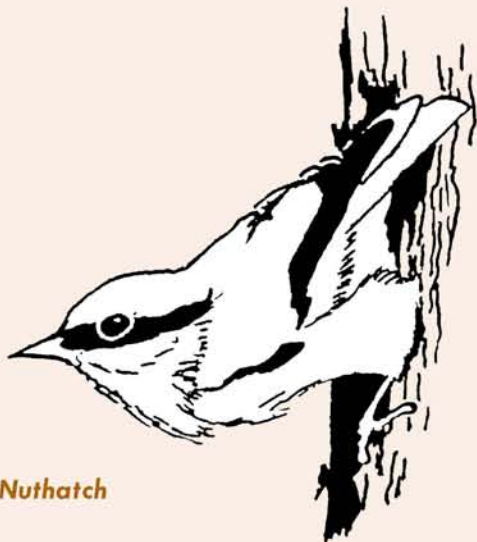
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ILL HILL ANCIENT MONUMENT

Bill Hill rises dramatically from the grassland off Downshire Way. Its setting, at the heart of Bracknell, is unique and from the trees cloaking the hilltop you gain a fascinating perspective on the town's high rise offices and apartment blocks. With ever expanding urban development closing in from all directions, the site offers a curious blend of ancient and new. A mile and a half to the south is The Look Out Discovery Park, located amid the trees and pine woods of what remains of Windsor Forest. From the main entrance to Bill Hill you can follow the clear trail up to the summit where several other well-used paths allow you to stroll at will amid the trees and enjoy the scene.

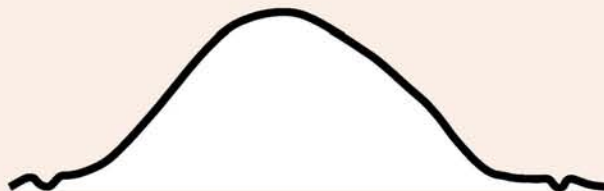
Bill Hill's wooded slopes of oak and beech create a striking local landmark as well as providing a pleasant island of woodland for both visitors and wildlife to enjoy. Squirrels are common, and you should also look out for woodpeckers and nuthatchers, as well as for garden birds such as robins and wrens.



Nuthatch

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Bill Hill is a very prominent landmark which can be seen from many areas of Bracknell. One of the most distinctive characteristics of this site are the tall beech trees which grow on top of the hill. They were probably planted at the end of the last century to provide a specific landscape feature for future generations. It is these beeches that give Bill Hill its special character, which changes with the seasons. Some of the older trees are being removed for safety reasons. However, young beech trees are being planted in their place to ensure the woodland of this important landscape is safeguarded.



Cross Section of Typical Round Barrow

ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE

At the top of the hill, on its eastern side, is a circular mound of earth, hollowed out in the centre. It is partly this feature that gives Bill Hill such great curiosity value. This is the remains of a Bronze Age tumulus or round barrow, an example of one of the most common of Britain's prehistoric monuments. Round barrows are found all over Britain and were used from the Neolithic period (c2200 BC) right through the Bronze Age (c1000 BC) and again in the Anglo Saxon period, although they date mainly from the Bronze Age. They were used as burial mounds and may cover individual or multiple burials. These barrows may also have been used for cremations.

A great many round barrows have been partly or completely levelled by subsequent land use, although they can often be detected as circular soil or crop marks

on aerial photographs. In addition, many tumuli were disturbed by the early barrow diggers of the late 18th and 19th centuries. These early excavators were concerned more with the contents of the barrows rather than their structure. For example, the excavators would often discard broken pottery and retain only complete, undamaged vessels. Few records of their excavations were kept. The hollow in the top of Bill Hill barrow may well have been the result of an early unrecorded excavation of this sort.



Common Oak

BARROW CONSTRUCTION

Since the early part of this century, barrows have been investigated on a more scientific basis. We now know that what appear to be simple monuments are often quite elaborate. Careful examination of a barrow can tell us a great deal about its method of construction. For example, it may have had two or even three ditches corresponding with different construction phases, and each accompanied by burials. Often round barrows were reused at a later date. The later or secondary burials were often inserted in the mound or outside it to the south east. Under some barrows the traces of the funeral pyre for cremations have been identified.

The Bill Hill barrow is surrounded by a ditch, now largely filled in, which would have provided the construction material for the mound. Elsewhere, barrows were constructed in locally available materials, such as turves or stone.