

Discovering Coldharbour Barrow.

A prehistoric mound revealed through archaeological investigation.

Fieldwork.

Archaeological investigations carried out before construction of the Coldharbour Solar Farm revealed evidence of past activity stretching back thousands of years. The most significant discovery was a prehistoric burial mound. The initial geophysical survey suggested several buried features across the site, most likely boundary ditches. Of particular interest were two potential ring ditches. Trial trenches targeting the survey results revealed a small number of boundary or enclosure ditches of uncertain date scattered across the site, as well as a single worked flint. Of the two possible ring ditches, one was confirmed as a prehistoric round barrow, with an upstanding mound still surviving.

The Round Barrow.

Round barrows, also known as tumuli, are circular mounds of earth, stone or both, often with a surrounding ditch. They can range from as much as 40m in diameter to as little as 5m. Most of these structures were built in the Early Bronze Age between about 2200–1500 BC, although some examples are known to be constructed earlier during the Late Neolithic period. Their main use was as funerary monuments containing one or more burials, often with later ‘satellite burials’ within the mound and ditch.

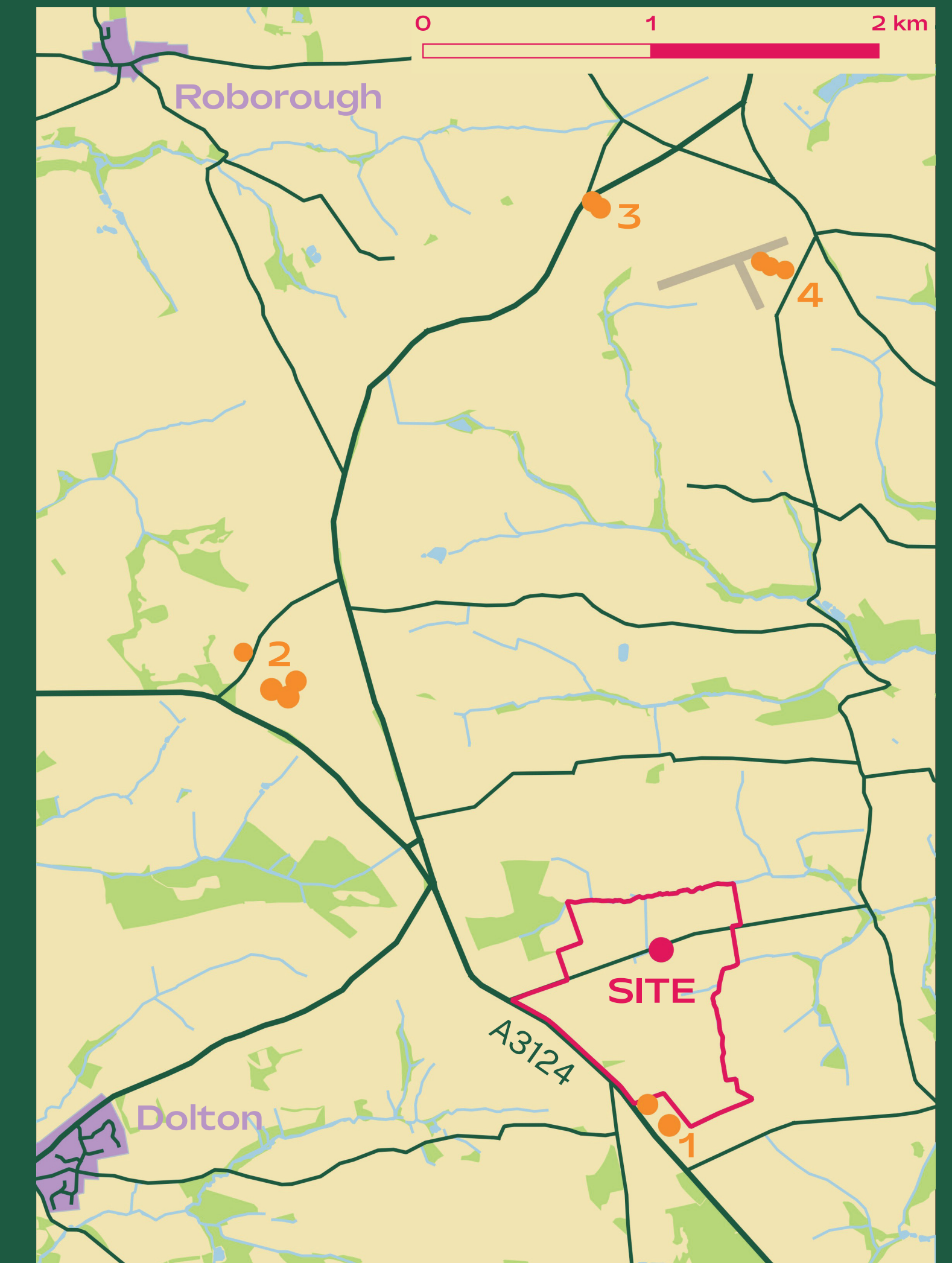
A trial trench across the barrow revealed a mound of multiple deposits standing 97cm high, ringed by a ditch 25m in diameter. The north and east of this ‘bowl barrow’ has been heavily damaged by the later hedges and roads. Three pits identified at the top of the mound were dated by pottery to the 12th–14th centuries AD, their purpose is unknown, but could represent an investigation in the Medieval period. Radiocarbon dating of charcoal recovered from the mound produced a date of 3331–3217 cal BCE placing its construction in the Later Neolithic period, an unusually early date for barrows in this region.



Archaeological excavation across the barrow mound.



Artist's impression of the Coldharbour 'bowl barrow'.



Map showing the location of the barrow (red) and nearby barrows (orange)

The Wider Landscape.

This barrow forms part of wider prehistoric landscape along the upland ridgeway marking the watershed between the River Torridge to the west and the River Taw to the east. Other barrows in the vicinity include two barrows west of Winkleigh Moor Cross (1) some 700m to the south, a group of four just east of Cupper's Piece (2) 2km to northwest and a further group of two and a group of four 3km to the northeast at Moorland Gate (3 & 4).