



Location: Felday, Holmbury St Mary, near Dorking, Surrey (TQ 107 446)

Main period: Iron Age (and World War I Prisoner of War camp)

Access & ownership: Felday lies in the greensand hills south of Dorking. It can be accessed from a car park suitable for minibuses and, with care, coaches, but involves a walk of about 1km including a short climb. The car-park, Hurtwood Trust no. 9, is located on the road between Sutton Abinger and Holmbury St Mary and a map can be seen on the Friends of the Hurtwood website below. From the car park walk south-west along the valley for about 150 m then turn left upslope and in about 100 m you will pass through the relatively slight ramparts and ditches of the hillfort. Continue uphill for a further 200 m then turn right – if you start going downhill you have missed the turn! The track now leads through the hillfort with the Prisoner of War camp on your right; the southern edge of the hillfort is crossed just before reaching a junction with a vehicular track.

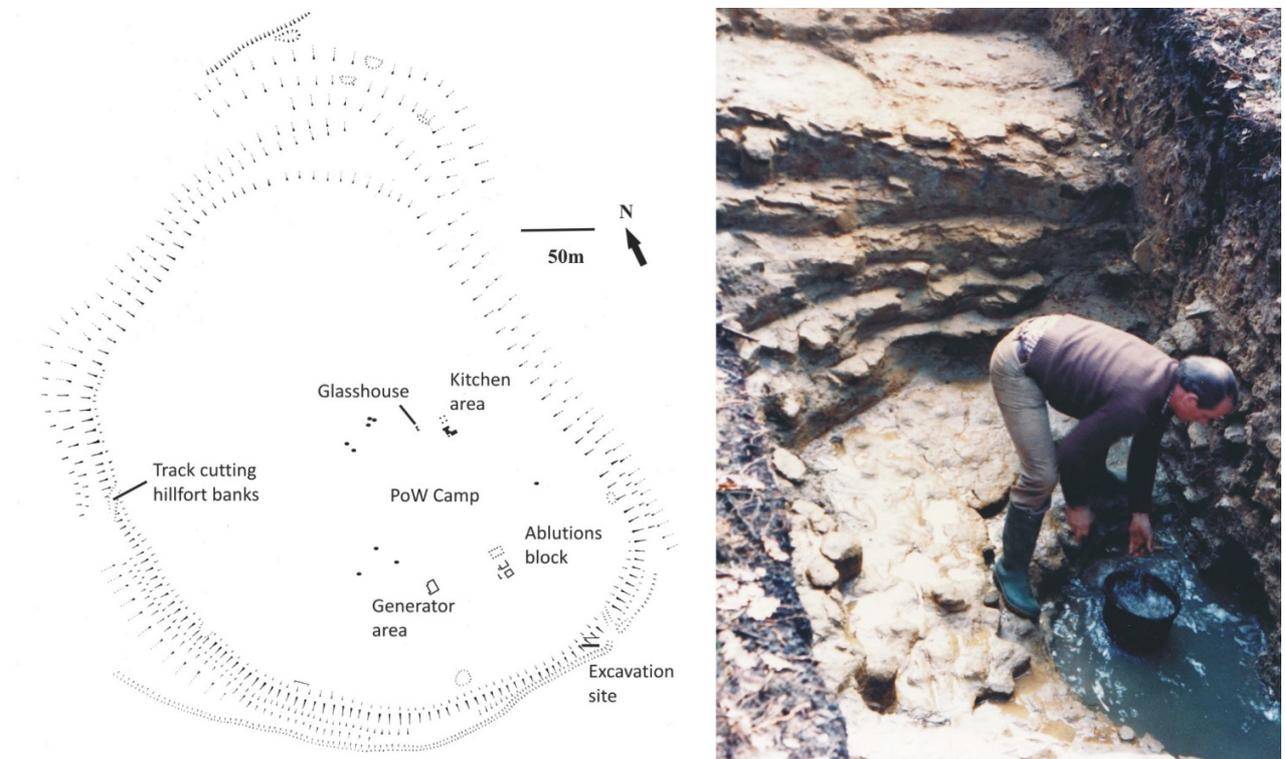


Fig 1. Left: analytical survey of Felday hillfort and Prisoner of War camp showing modern western entrance. Right: Rock-cut ditch of hillfort under excavation in 1984/5

Felday hillfort or enclosure was not recognised until 1985 and only very limited excavation has taken place on the south side. The small amount of pottery recovered suggest it originated in the Middle Iron Age but that its main period of use was during the Late Iron Age. The hillfort is surrounded by a double bank-and-ditch for most of its circumference but above the steep north-eastern side the slope is terraced. Erosion of the sandy soil in some areas has almost levelled the banks. Nevertheless, excavation has shown the ditch to have been about 2.4 m deep, cut into the underlying greensand, and the rock removed may have been used to revet the sand bank. Even allowing for erosion, the ramparts at Felday appear less defensive than at Holmbury hillfort, which lies just 1km to the south. The location of the original entrance/s remains uncertain. A hearth was found close inside the southern section of the bank but the interior was not investigated and the degree and nature of any occupation remains unknown. The

dating evidence retrieved could allow Felday to have overlapped with Holmbury, but is more likely to have post-dated it.

The Felday enclosure contrasts with the Surrey Greensand hillforts of Holmbury and, 10km to the west, Hascombe, both in terms of its size and topographical location. Some 7 ha are enclosed inside the bank and ditches, double that at Holmbury. Holmbury and Hascombe look out over the Low Weald towards the South Downs while Felday and Anstiebury, a Late Iron Age hillfort to the east which survived into the Romano-British period (TQ 154 440), overlook gaps in the greensand ridge. Any movement between the Low Weald and the Tillingbourne valley and the Mole Gap through the North Downs could be monitored. The size of Felday suggests that it was perhaps also used for stock, possibly in transit away from Wealden grazing areas. That Anstiebury, with its late activity, overlooked Stane Street, the Roman road from Chichester to London, might suggest a continuation of this role of control of passage. The most important resource available in the Weald during the Iron Age was iron ore and although little evidence has yet been found of contemporary extraction, iron production waste was found at Hascombe hillfort. Moreover, one of the depictions on a 'sceptre binding' from the Late Iron Age / Romano-British temple on Farley Heath appears to represent a Celtic iron-working god.

Within the Felday enclosure are the remains, in the form of concrete foundations, of a World War I Prisoner of War camp which operated between 1917 and 1919. German prisoners housed here worked at clear-felling the surrounding conifer woodland. A sketch made in 1985 by Beattie Ede (below) who remembered seeing the camp whilst occupied has been used to identify an ablutions area, kitchen and generator blocks and a glasshouse as well as piles of calcium carbonate marking the positions of acetylene lights on the boundary fence. More about this phase of use can be found in Newell and Winser 2011, and Newell *et al.* forthcoming.



Fig 2. Left: sketch of Felday prisoner of War Camp by Beattie Ede. Top right: generator base. Bottom right: kitchen area.

References

- Field, D. 1989. Felday, Holmbury St Mary: an earthwork enclosure of the 1st century AD. *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 79, 99–116
- Goodchild, R.G. 1938. A priest's sceptre from the Romano-Celtic temple at Farley Heath, Surrey. *Antiquaries Journal* 18, 391–6
- Newell, J. & Winser, K. 2011. Felday World War I Prisoner of War Camp and Iron Age Enclosure: an archaeological survey. Available at <https://independent.academia.edu/JudieEnglish>
- Newell, J., Winser, K. & English, J. In press with *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 2015. The Iron Age enclosure and First World War Prisoner of War camp at Felday, Holmbury St Mary, near Dorking
- Friends of the Hurtwood: <http://www.friendsofthehurtwood.co.uk/>
- Pastscape: <http://www.pastscape.org.uk>

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