

# The Oldest Road

An Exploration of the Ridgeway

# The Oldest Road

An Exploration of  
**The Ridgeway**

J. R. L. Anderson  
Fay Godwin







Cotswold Hills

Ivinghoe Beacon

Oxford

Wendover

Tring

Vale of White Horse

Princes Risborough

Chiltern Hills

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OFFICIAL NATIONAL  
TRAIL GUIDE



# *The Ridgeway*

Anthony Burton

87 miles of downland walking  
from Wiltshire to the Chilterns



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4. South West Coast Path

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6. The Ridgeway

7. Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path

8. Offa's Dyke Path

9. Glyndwr's Path

10. Pembrokeshire Coast Path

11. Pennine Bridleway

12. Pennine Way

14. Cleveland Way

15. Hadrian's Wall Path

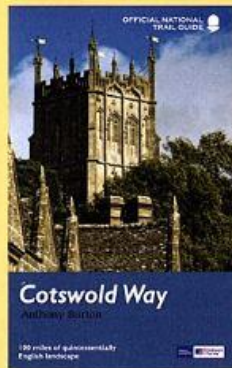


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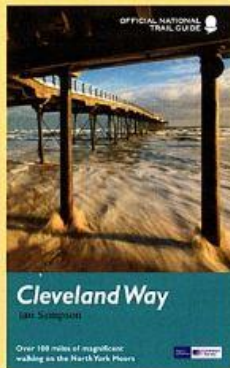
# The National Trails



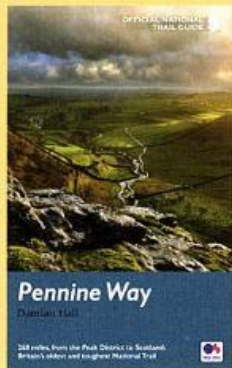
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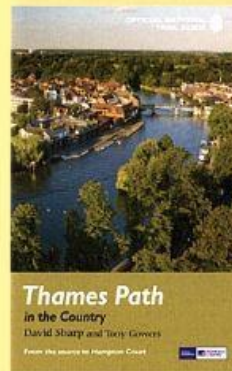
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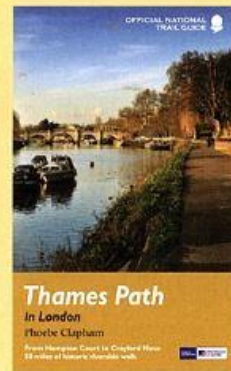
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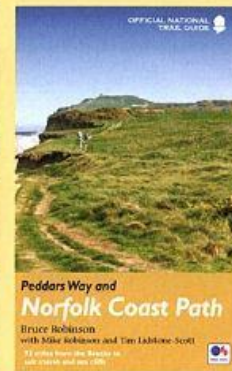
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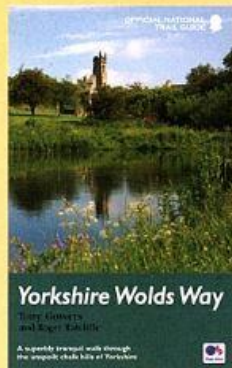
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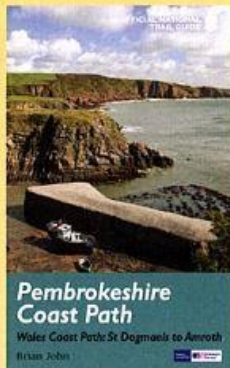
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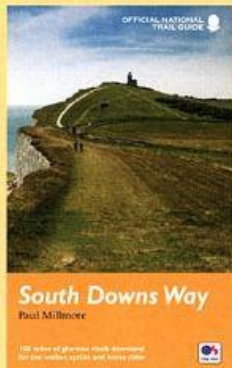
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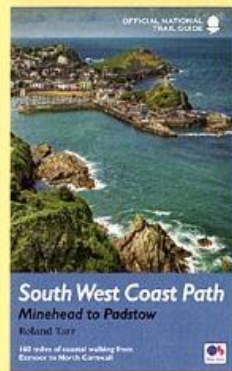
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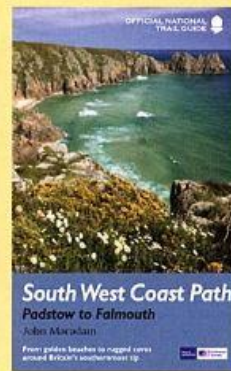
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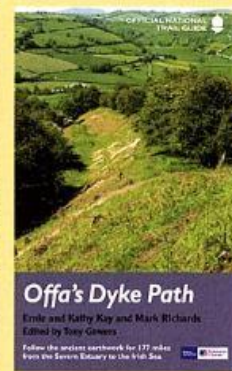
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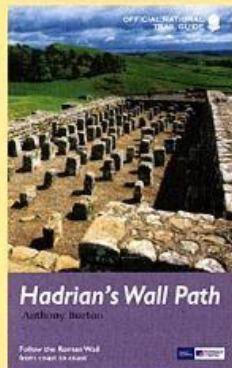
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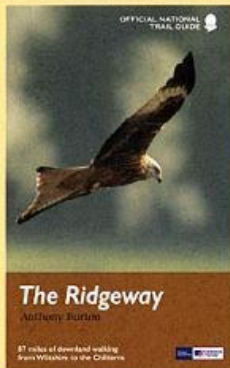
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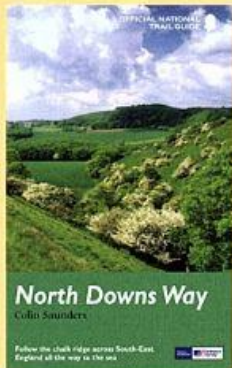
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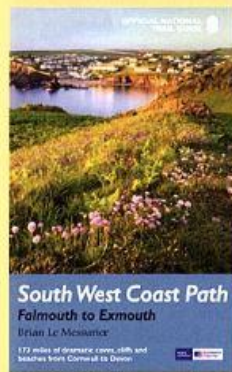
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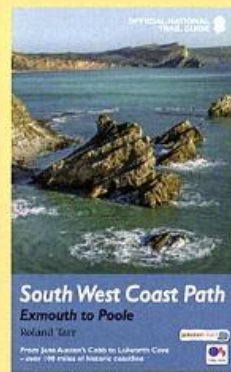
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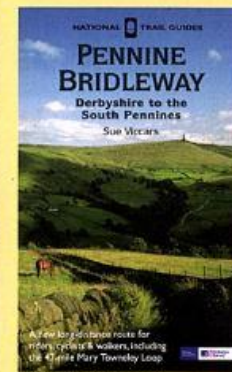
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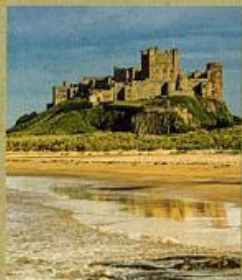
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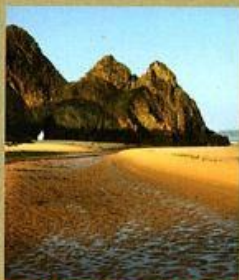
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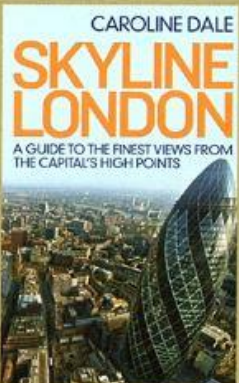


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## New rights – new responsibilities

All National Trails are Rights of Way

There are three types of public right of way:

- If the highway is a **footpath** it may be used for walking
- If the highway is a **bridleway** it may be used for riding or leading a horse, as well as for walking. Cycling is also permitted, providing the cyclists give way to riders and pedestrians. Driving a horse-drawn vehicle is not permitted
- A **byway open to all traffic** (usually called a 'byway' is used for walking, riding, leading a horse or cycling. There is also a right to use any kind of wheeled vehicle, including motorcars and horse-drawn vehicles.

Some rights of way are recorded under the old term 'roads used as public paths' (RUPPS). The law is not clear about what rights exist over RUPPS and they are now being reclassified as 'restricted byways'. In the meantime, you have the same rights on a RUPP as you have on a bridleway but there may be uncertainty about whether you can take a vehicle.

### On rights of way you can:

- Take a pram, pushchair or wheelchair (including motorised buggies) if practical
- Take a dog (on a lead or under close control)
- Stop for a while – to admire the view, take a photograph, make a sketch, eat a picnic or simply to rest – providing you stay on the path and don't cause an obstruction

### Open Access land

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), the public can walk freely on mapped areas of mountain, moor, heath, downland and registered common land without having to stick to paths.

People across England now have approximately 865,000 hectares of land across which they can walk, ramble, run, explore, climb and watch wildlife as they are given the freedom to access land, without having to stay on paths.

The new rights, for which people have been campaigning for over 100 years, came into effect across all of England on 31 October 2005.

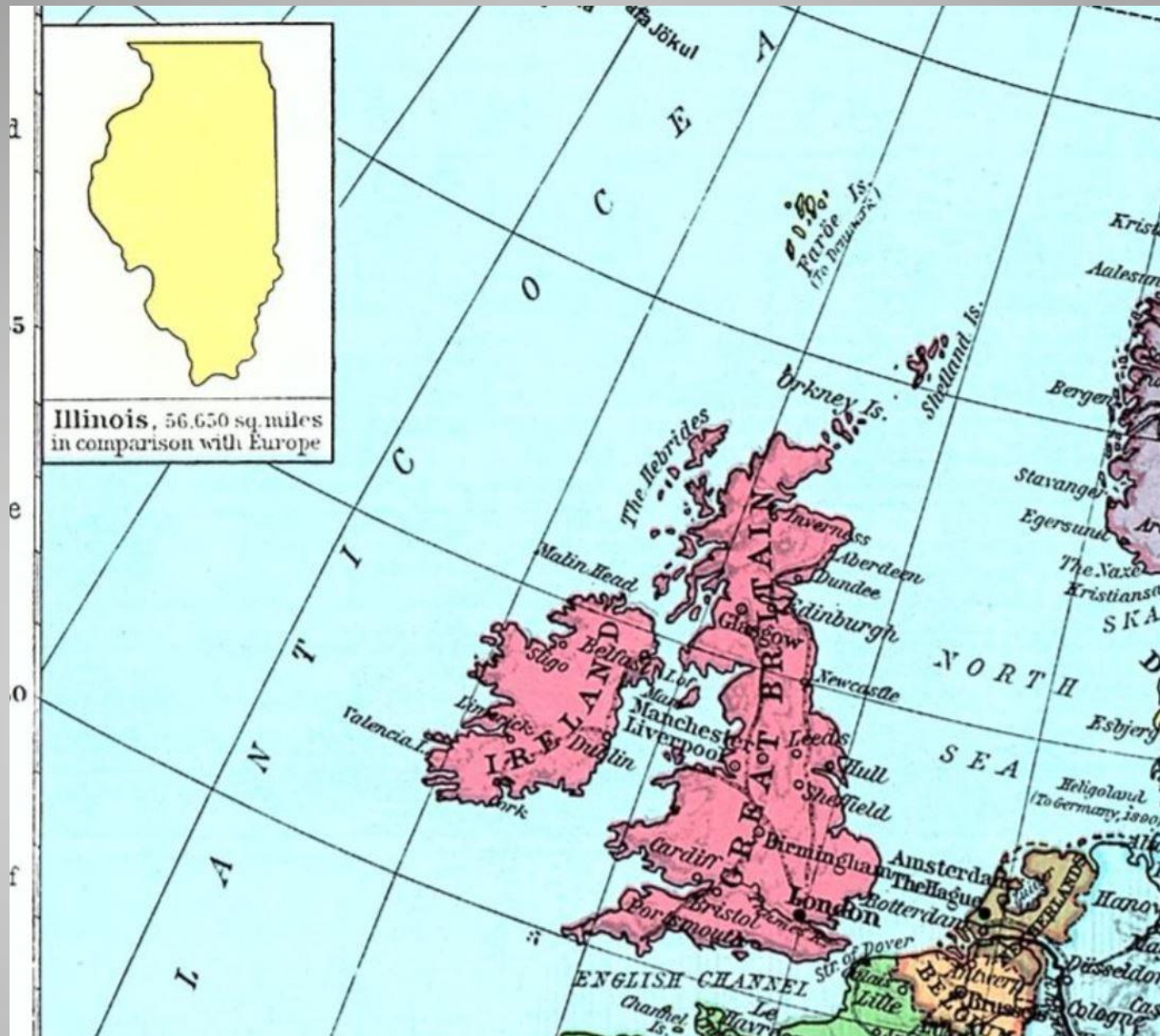
The new rights cover most recreational activities carried out on foot, including walking, sightseeing, bird watching, climbing and running. On all open access land from 1 March to 31 July dogs must be kept on a short lead (no more than two metres) to protect ground nesting birds. At all times of the year dogs must be kept on a short lead (no more than two metres) in the vicinity of livestock.

The new right of access does not include cycling, horse riding, driving a vehicle or camping but where these activities already take place (e.g. on an existing bridleway) they are unaffected.

### Wherever you go in the countryside, always follow the Countryside Code

- **Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs**
- **Leave gates and property as you find them**
- **Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home**
- **Keep dogs under close control**
- **Consider other people**

For more information on the new right of 'open access' and the Countryside Code, visit the website page [www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying), email [open.access@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:open.access@naturalengland.org.uk) or telephone 0845 100 3298



ILLINOIS — 56,650 sq. mi.

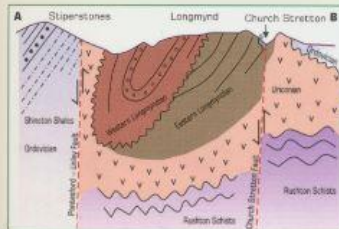
ENGLAND / WALES — 58,355 sq. mi.

[England 50,337 sq. mi.]

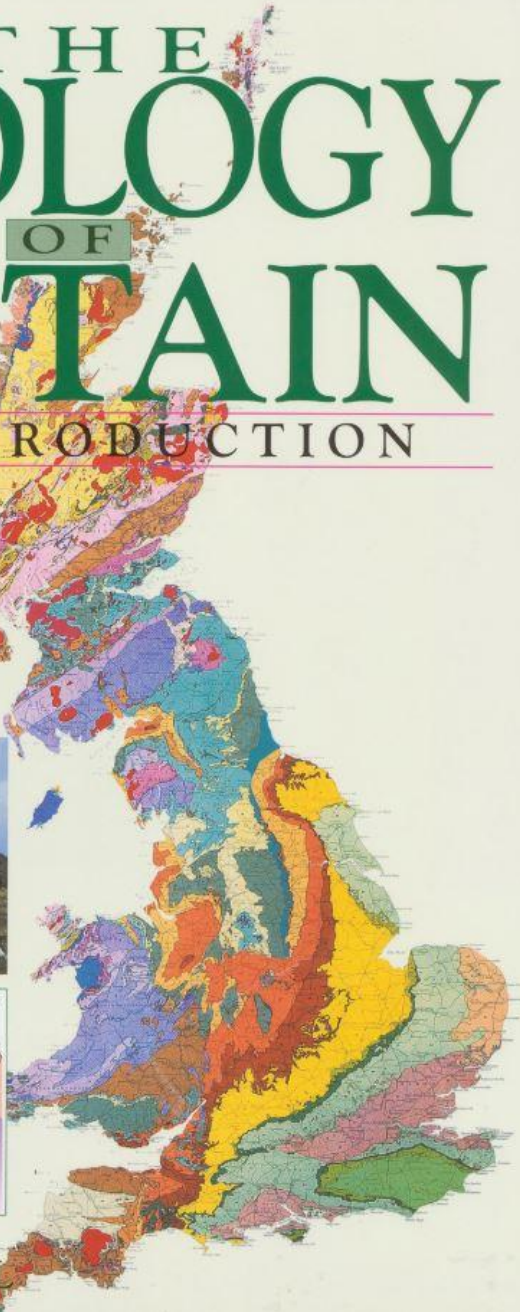
[Wales 8,018 sq. mi.]

# THE GEOLOGY OF BRITAIN

AN INTRODUCTION



PETER TOGHILL



# Bedrock Geology of Illinois

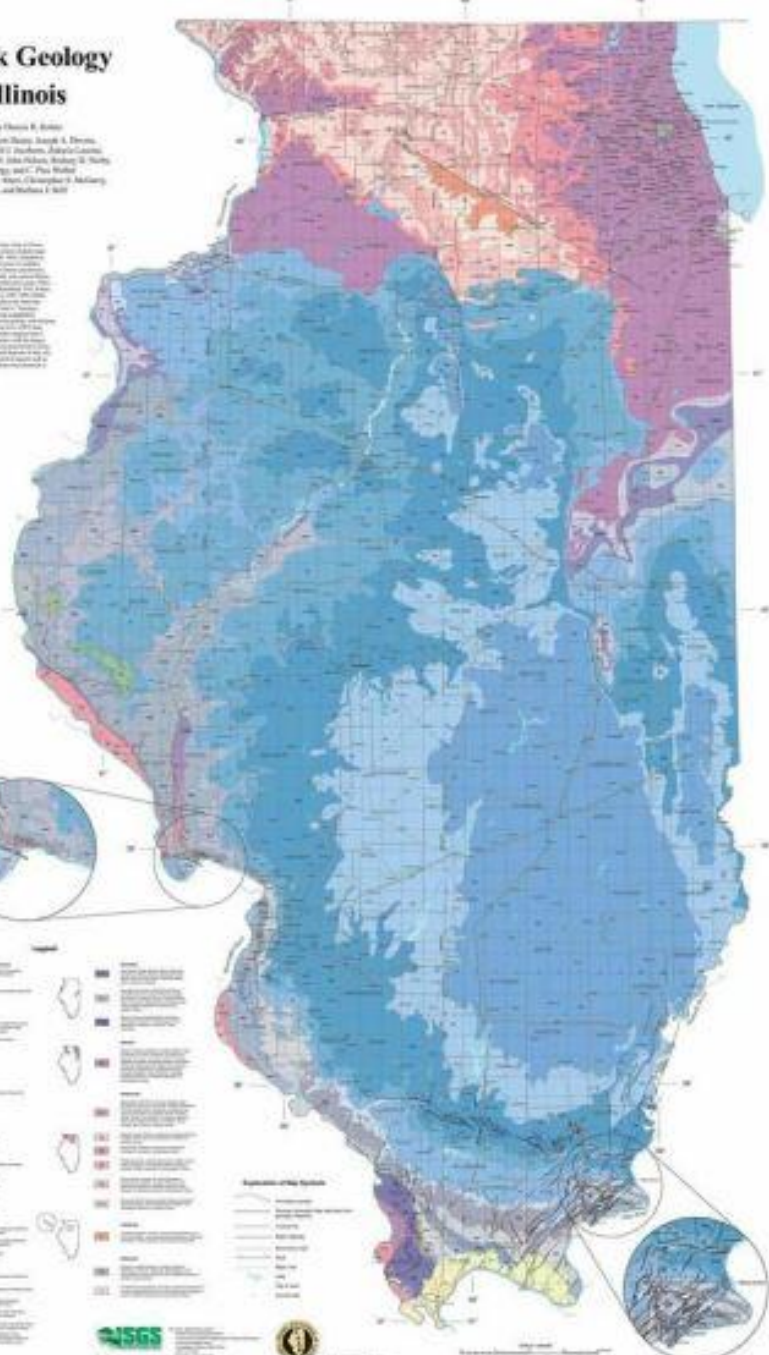
Compiled by Thomas R. Baker  
Contributors: T. Mark Galloway, David A. Dwyer,  
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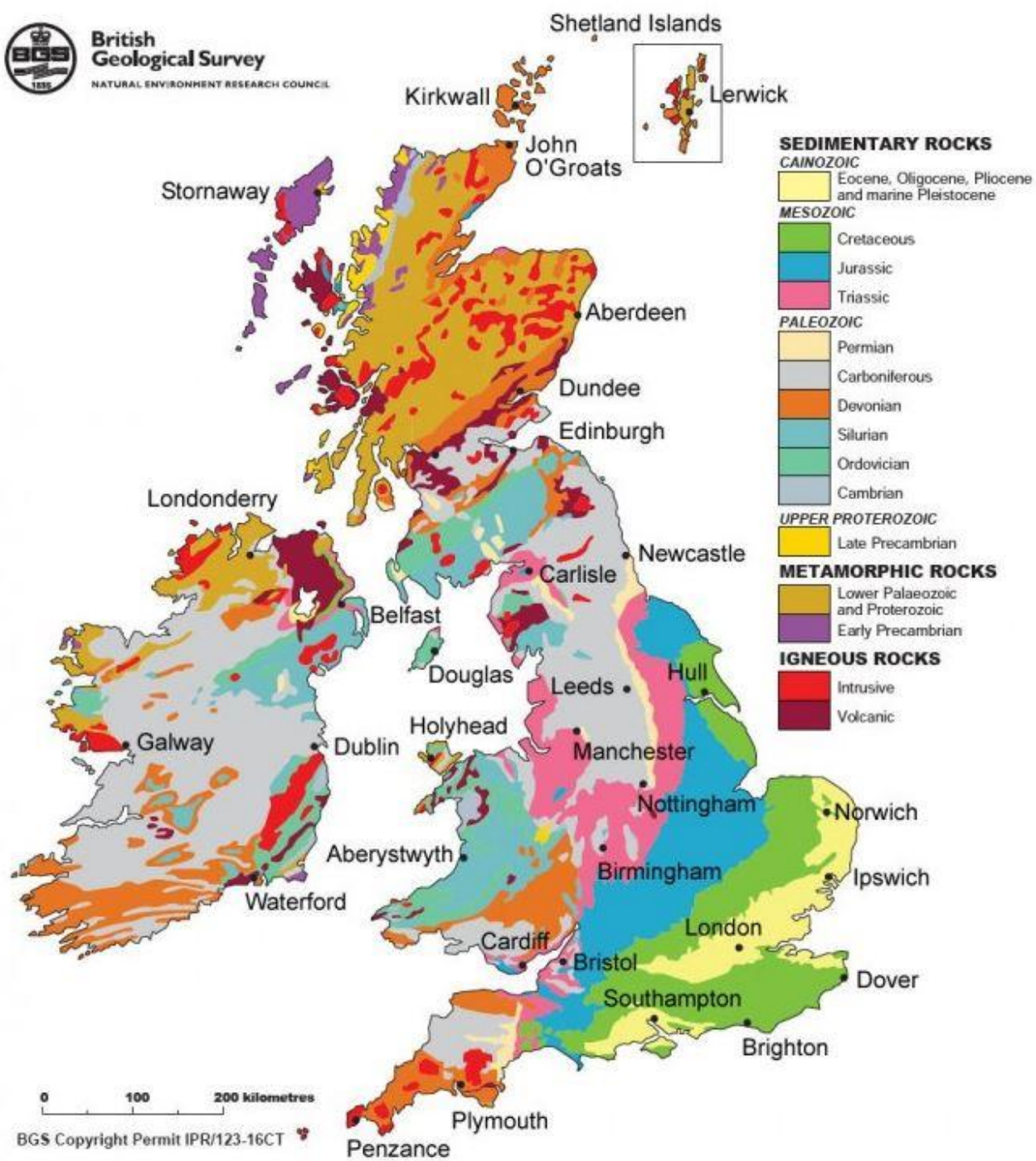
This map is a compilation of bedrock geologic maps of Illinois. It is based on the work of many geologists who have mapped the bedrock geology of Illinois over the years. The map is a compilation of maps published by the Illinois Geological Survey and the United States Geological Survey. The map is a compilation of maps published by the Illinois Geological Survey and the United States Geological Survey. The map is a compilation of maps published by the Illinois Geological Survey and the United States Geological Survey.

### Area Shaded on this Map



### Scale of this Map





Shetland Islands

Kirkwall

John O'Groats

Lerwick

Stornaway

Aberdeen

Dundee

Edinburgh

Londonderry

Newcastle

Belfast

Douglas

Leeds

Hull

Galway

Dublin

Holyhead

Manchester

Nottingham

Norwich

Aberystwyth

Birmingham

Ipswich

Waterford

Cardiff

London

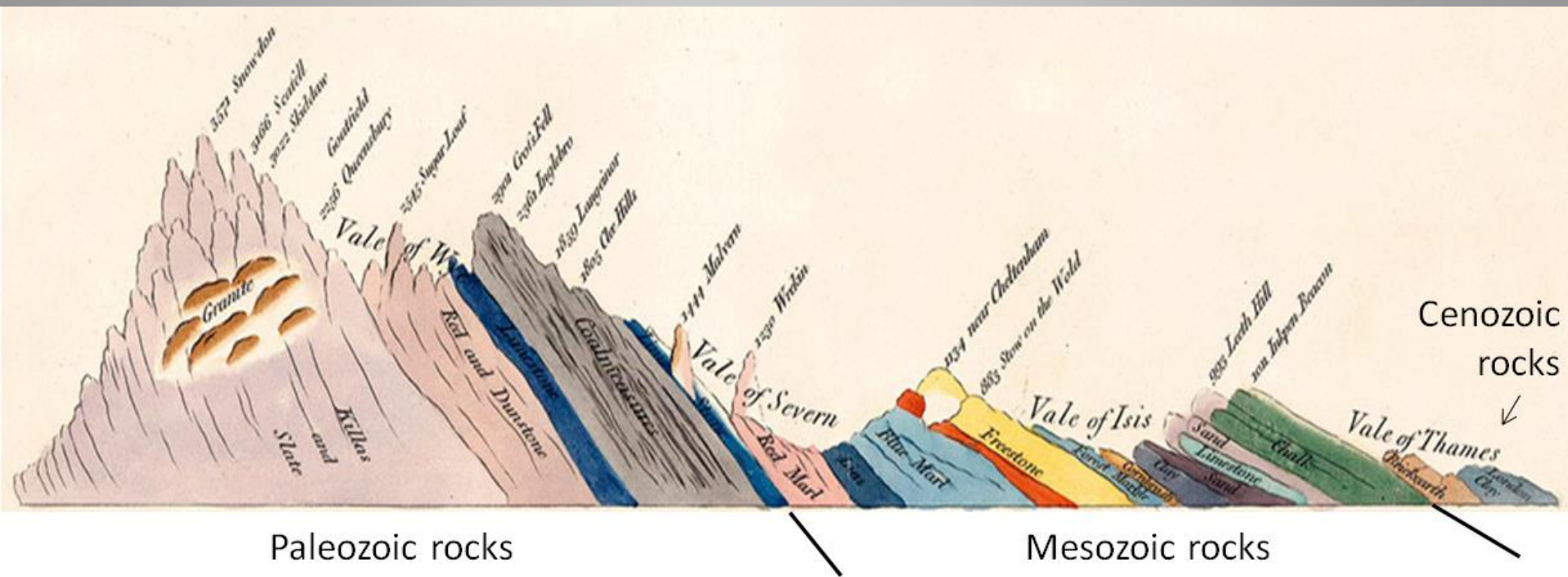
Dover

Bristol

Brighton

Plymouth

Penzance



**“The doming up and south-easterly tilt of Britain may have been caused by a late Cretaceous hot-spot or mantle plume centered under the Irish Sea off North Wales....Up to 200,000 cubic kilometers of rock have been eroded from the domed up areas since the end of the Cretaceous.”**

—P. Toghil, The Geology of Britain

So where does all this chalk come from?



Dover Cliffs

The Ridgeway

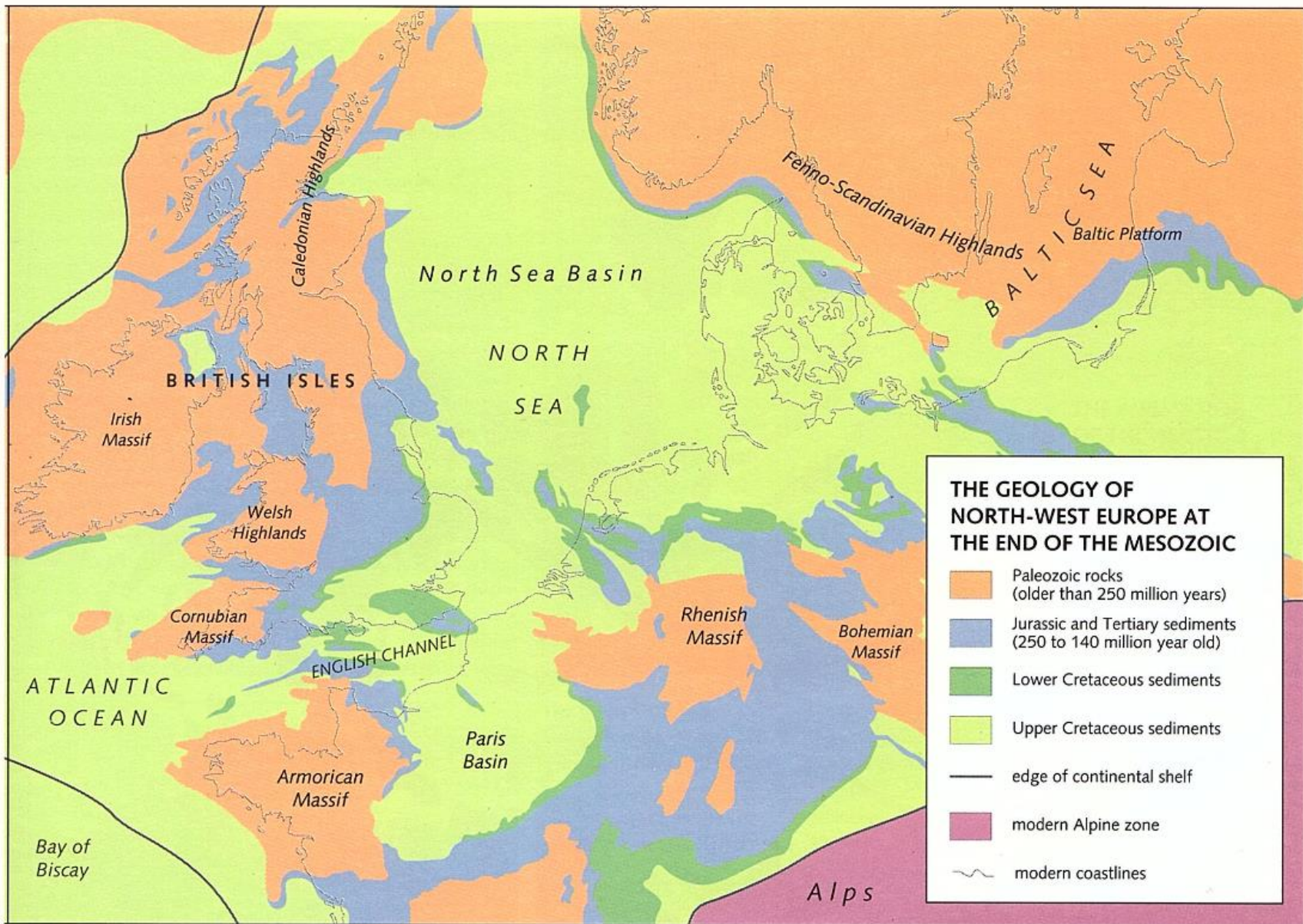


Beachy Head



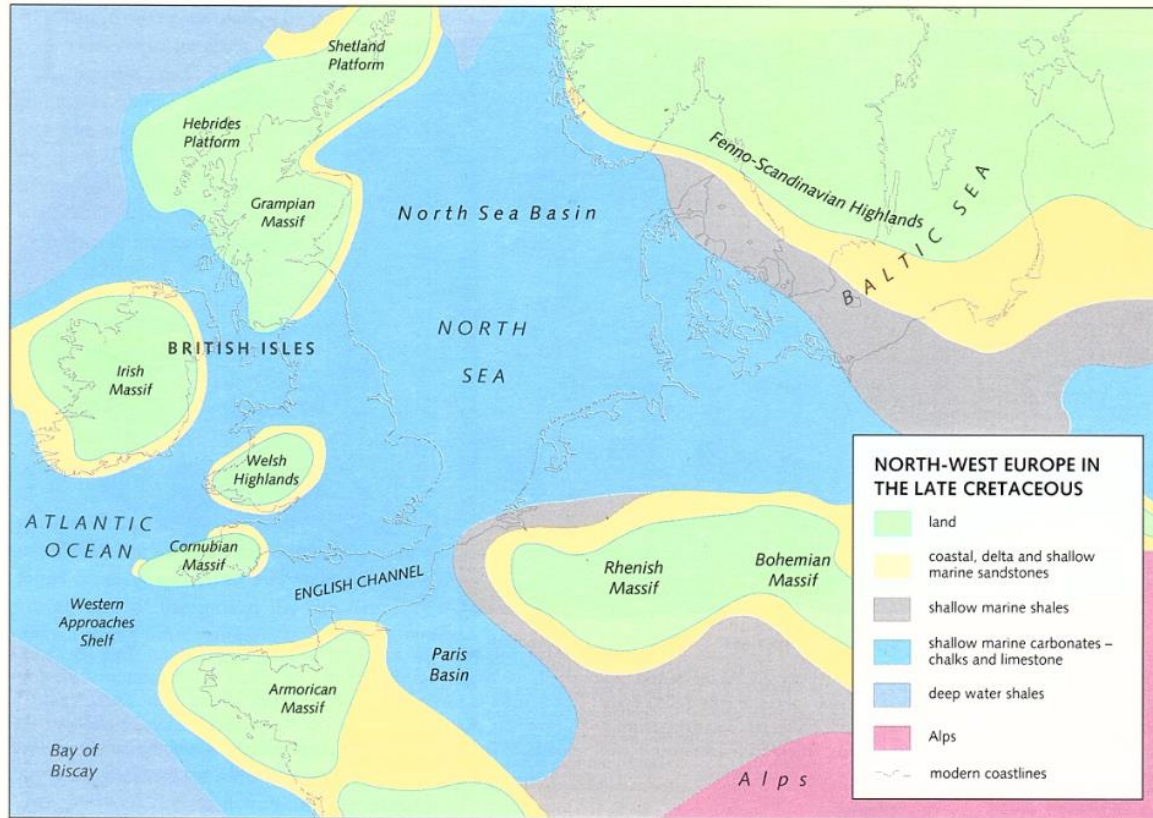
Cap Blanc Nez, France





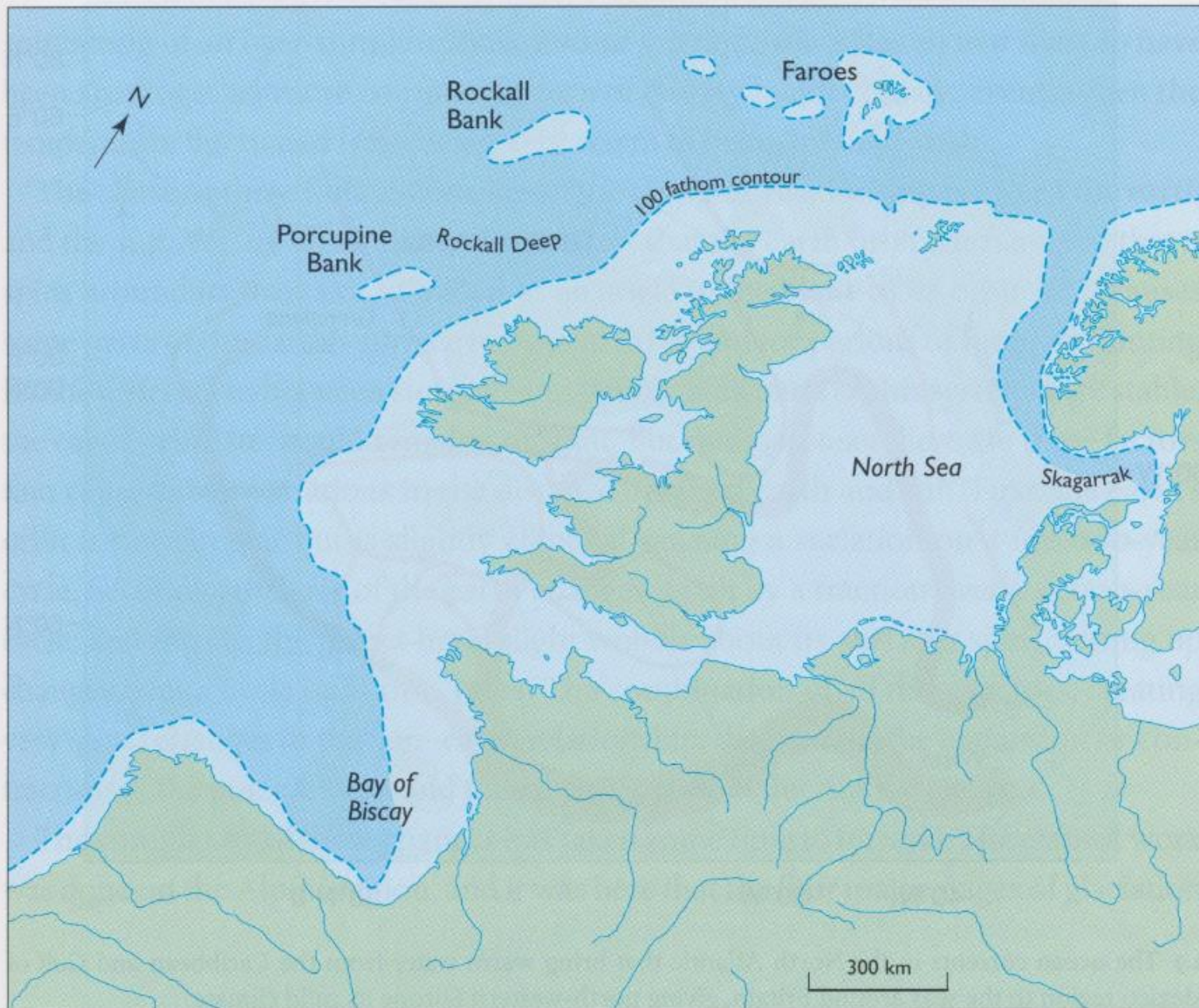
# Chalk

Warm, tranquil waters over northern Europe

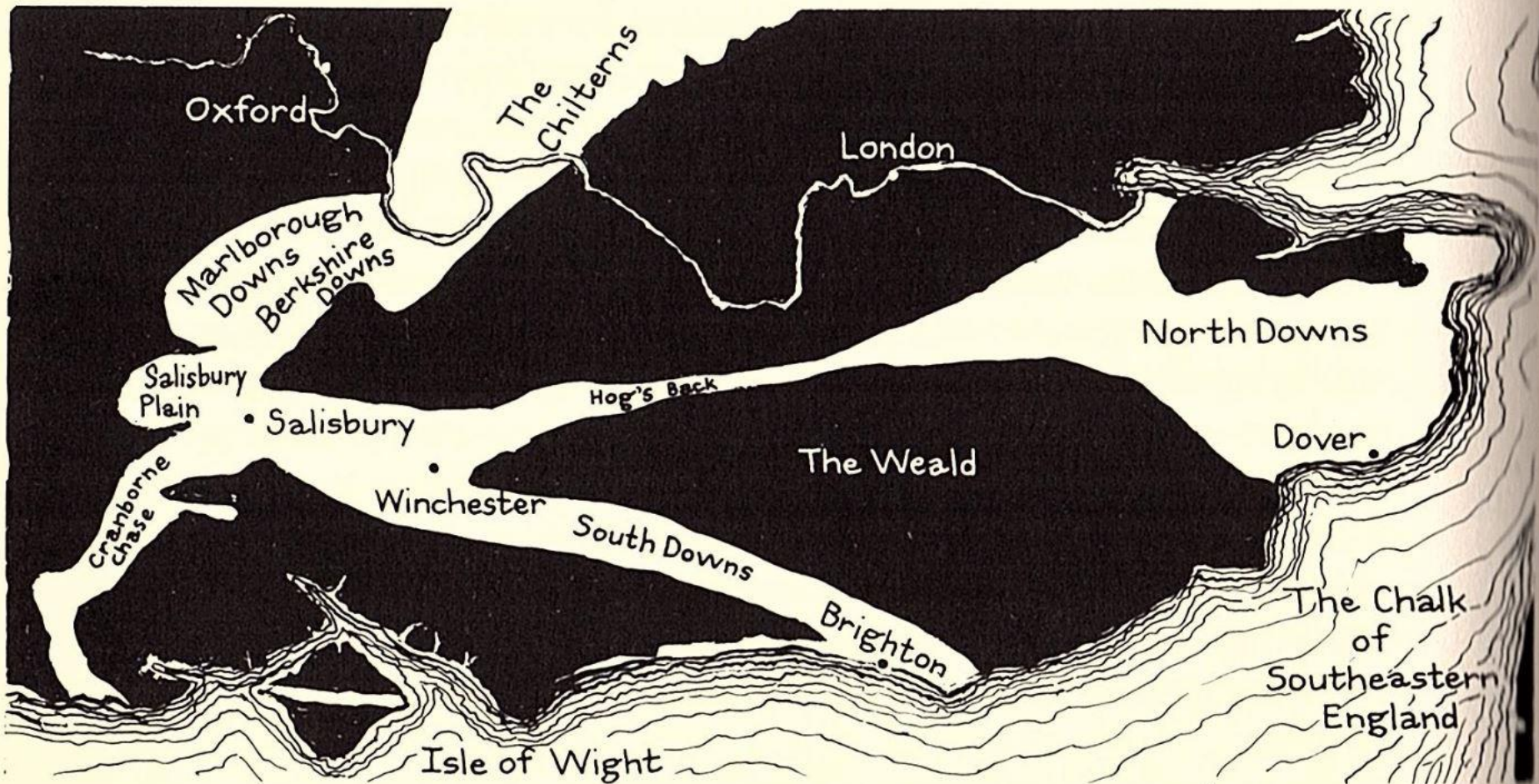


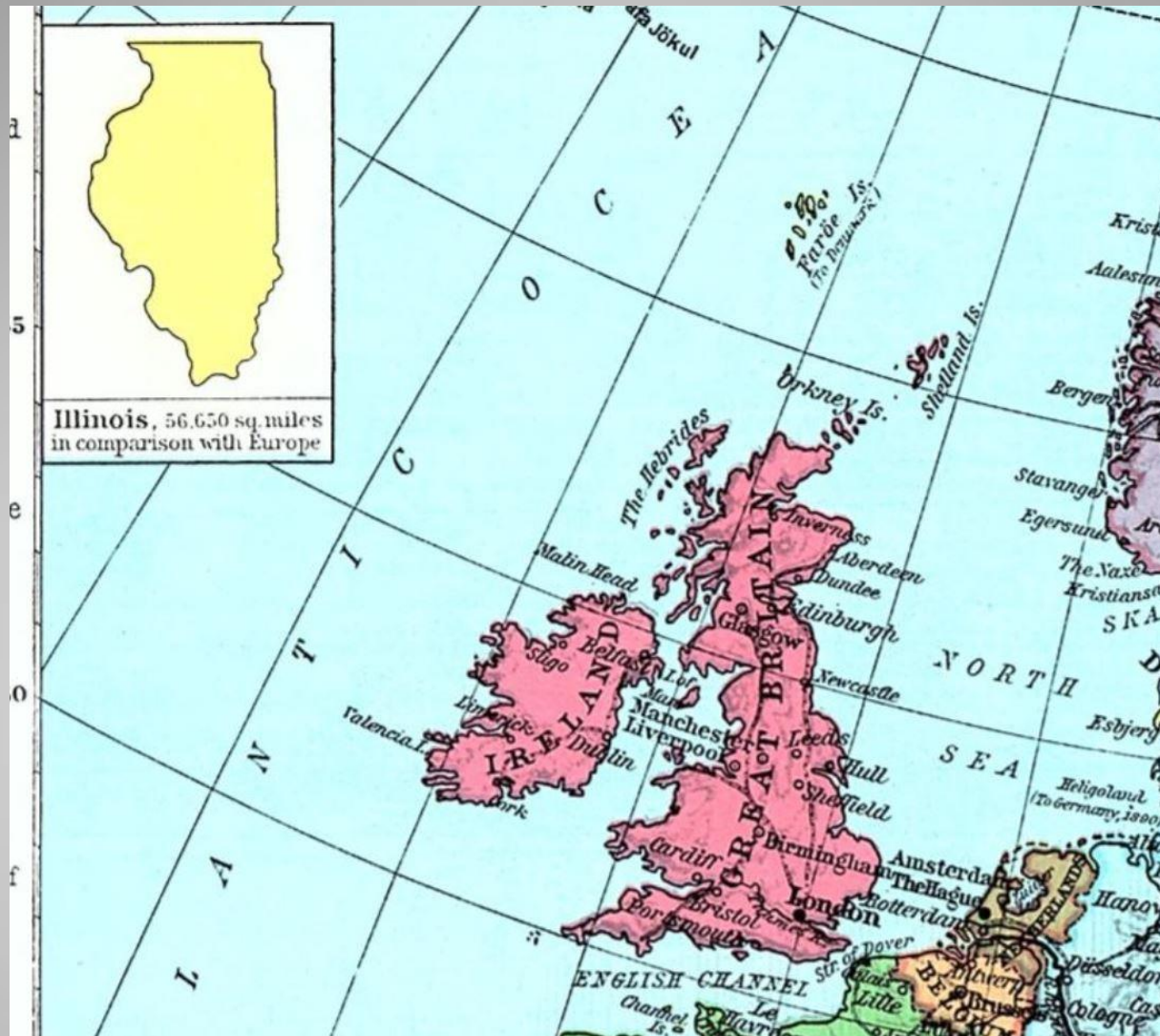
**D**uring the Cretaceous period, about 80 million years ago, sea levels rose to such an extent that almost all the continents of the Earth were under water. Shallow seas invaded the continents leaving only small areas remaining as land. The seas ebbed and flooded, and different parts of the land were under water at different times. But it seems that almost every part of the Earth was under water at some stage during the Late Cretaceous period.

Chalk is made up of the bodies of tiny single-celled algae called coccoliths. These are only formed in clear, warm, tranquil water – usually found on continental shelf areas in the tropics. As they die, billions of microscopic coccoliths fall to the sea bed in a continuous rain to form an ooze. This process is now happening in the Caribbean. As more sediment is piled on top the ooze hardens and becomes lithified, forming the pure white rock known as chalk..



2.2 Britain and the Continental Shelf, showing the main topographical features



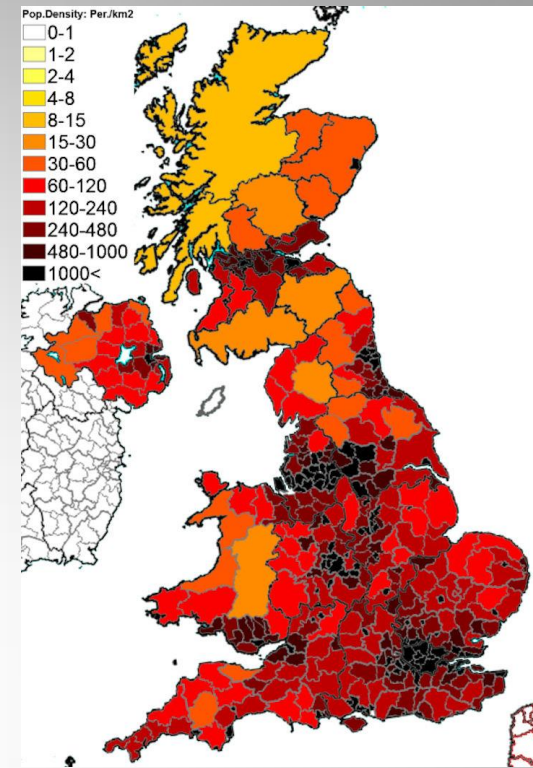
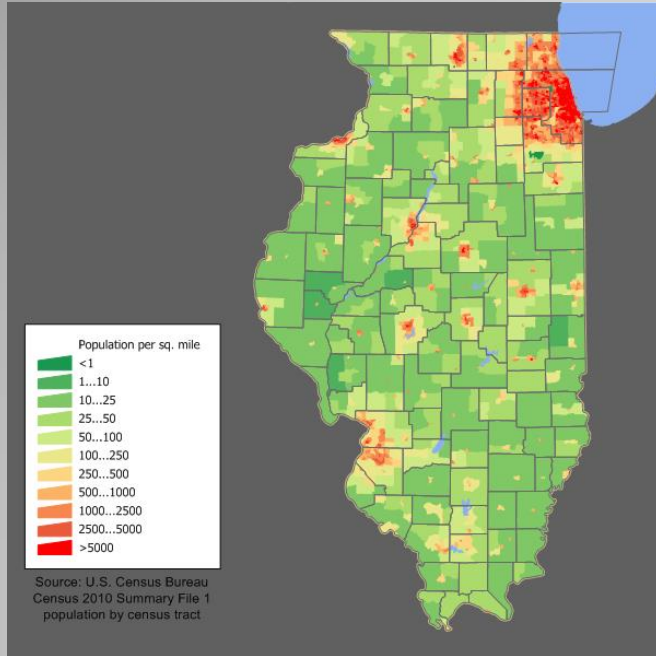


ILLINOIS — 56,650 sq. mi.

ENGLAND / WALES — 58,355 sq. mi.

[England 50,337 sq. mi.]

[Wales 8,018 sq. mi.]



## Population

- Total

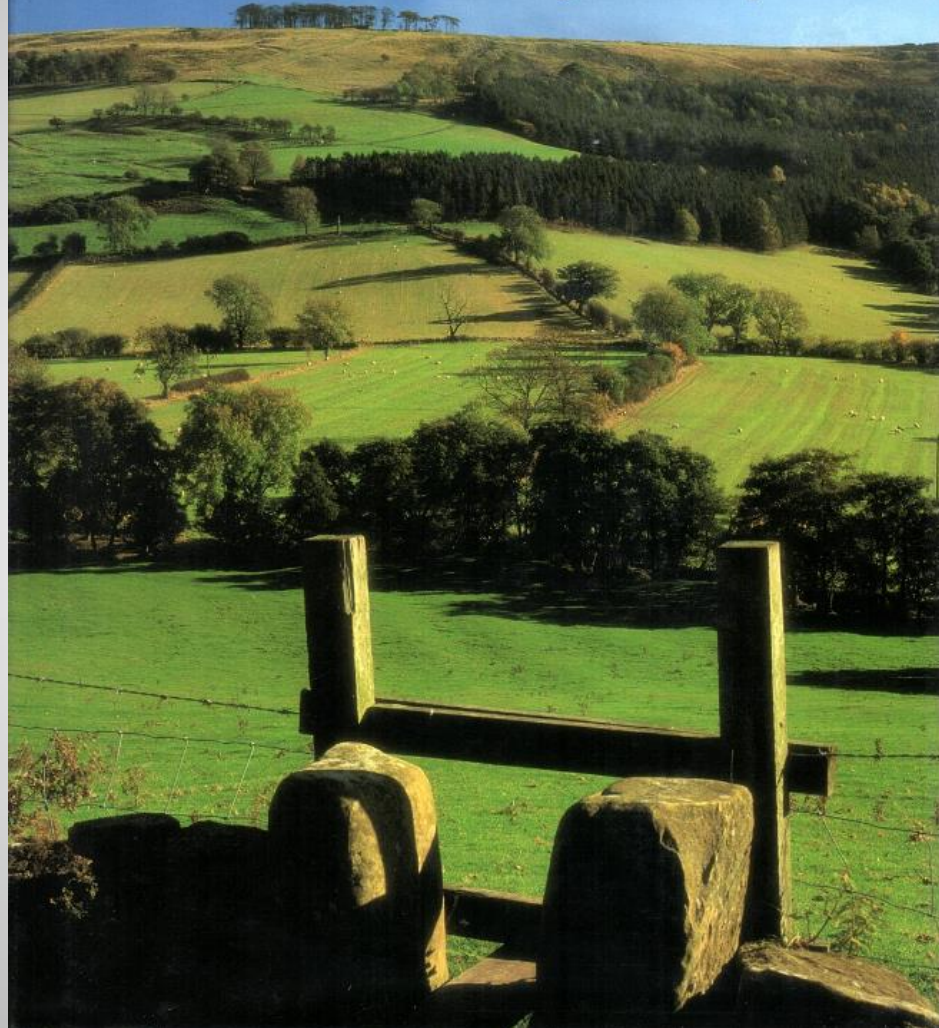
Ranked 5th

12,801,539 (2016 est.)

	Population mid-2016	Share of UK population
England	55,268,100	84.2%
Wales	3,113,200	4.7%
Scotland	5,404,700	8.2%
Northern Ireland	1,862,100	2.8%
UK	65,648,100	100.0%

# The English Landscape

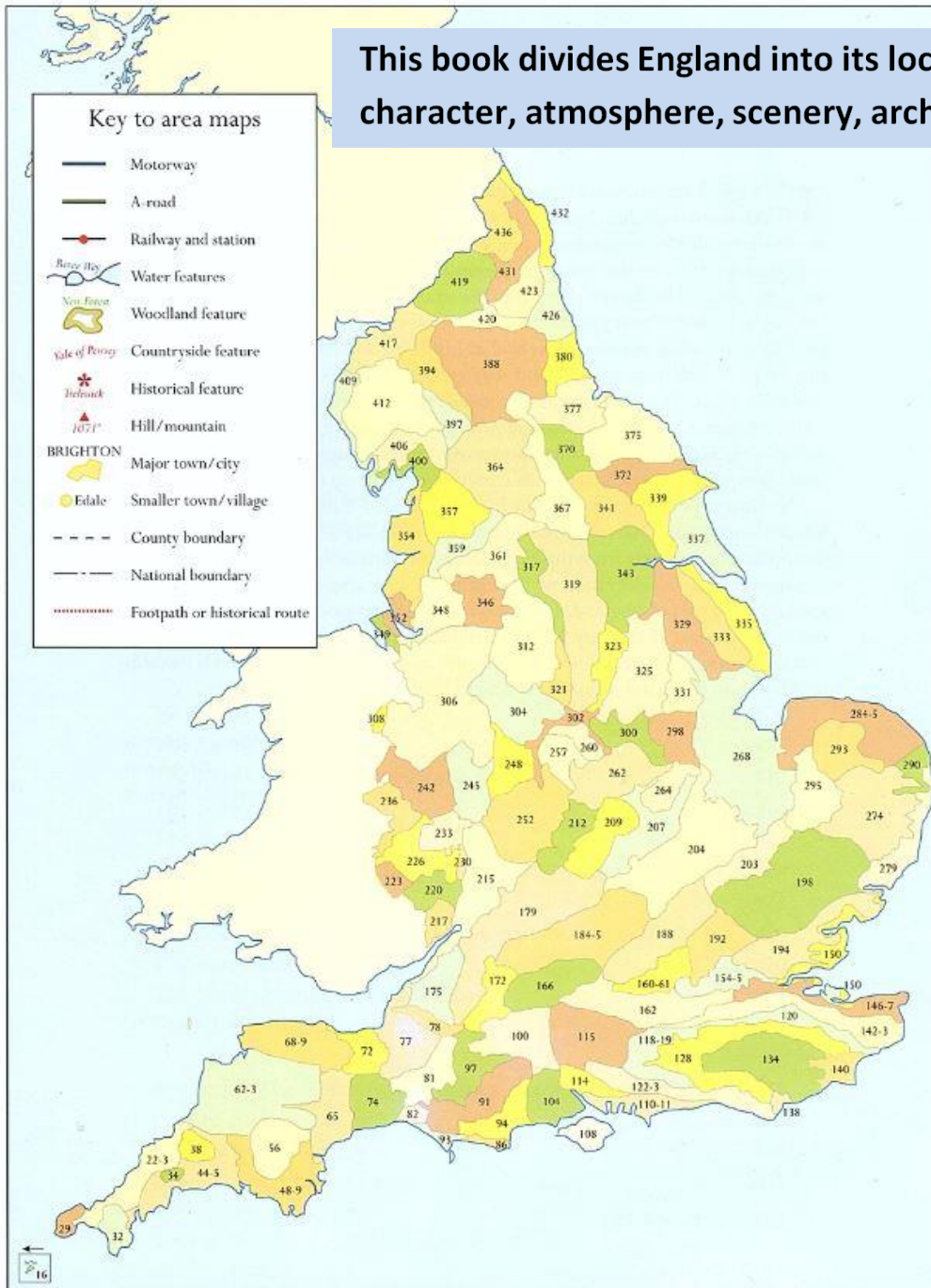
*with an introduction by* Bill Bryson



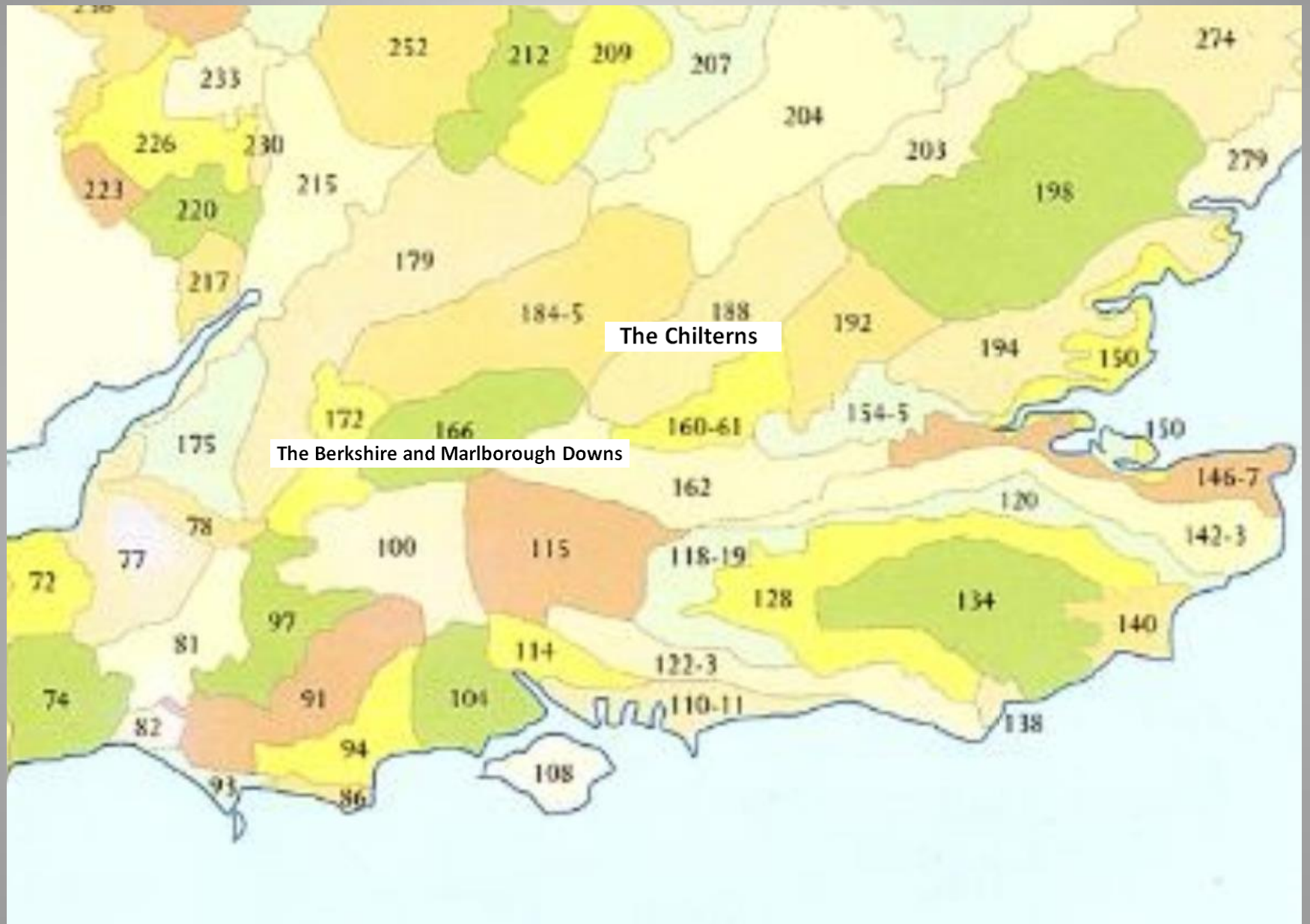
This book divides England into its local regions, each with its own character, atmosphere, scenery, architecture and vegetation.

Key to area maps

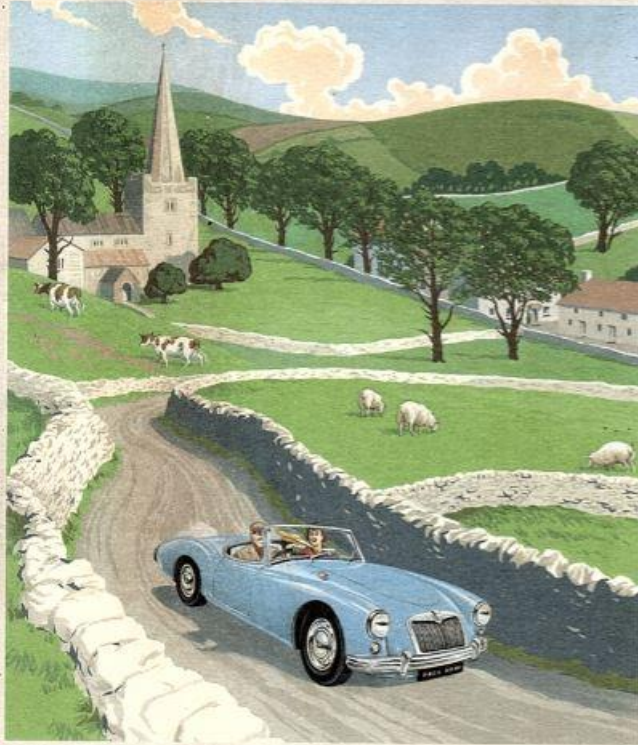
- Motorway
- A road
- Railway and station
- Water features
- Woodland feature
- Countryside feature
- Historical feature
- Hill/mountain
- Major town/city
- Smaller town/village
- County boundary
- National boundary
- Footpath or historical route







GEOFFREY GRIGSON



THE SHELL  
COUNTRY ALPHABET

*From Apple Trees to Stone Circles,  
How to Understand the British Countryside*

With a Foreword by Sophie Grigson

wandering Dark Age saints, and their lives and legends and churches will be found in G. H. Doble's *Saints of Cornwall*, vols. I–IV, 1960–65.

**CENTAUR**, or Sagittarius. Half horse, half man, the centaur was a Greek invention, or projection into imaginable form of stallion-like violence. But the centaur as bowman (Sagittarius), shooting an arrow at lion or dragon, appears in church sculpture as a symbol of Christ mounted on the horse of his vengeance against the Jews and slaying evil or harrowing hell. This centaur bowman is to be seen on MISERICORDS, BOSSES, capitals, FONTS, and TYMPANA (e.g. Kencott, Oxfordshire) over the main door into church.

See also HARROWING OF HELL.

**CHALK**, a limestone (i.e. a rock largely made up of calcium carbonate from the shelled creatures of ancient seas, which can be 'burnt' or calcined into lime, or calcium oxide), varies in degree of softness and in tones of white and grey. The white Upper Chalk is a great scenery builder, or rather has been moulded by time into swelling scenery such as that of the Yorkshire Wolds and the downlands of Wessex and the south. Since it drains quickly and affords a dry living and was anciently covered with scrub rather than forest, chalk country was favoured by early immigrants, the first nomadic stock-raisers and farmers of the neolithic, the Bronze Age peoples who raised round barrows over the remains of their dead, and the Iron Age farmers who retreated into ramparted farmsteads or hill-forts. For some 5,000 years sheep and cattle have nibbled the grass of the rolling chalk hills and kept them characteristically smooth.

Driving through the countryside, it is often possible to tell at a glance where a chalky soil begins and ends from the disappearance or sudden appearance of certain obvious plants and flowers which dislike or like the presence of lime. Broom, foxglove and bracken are lime-haters, ending abruptly with chalk or limestone. Old Man's Beard demands lime and festoons tree and hedge along chalky or limestone lanes (especially in the south). The blue Meadow Cranesbill in summer beautifully characterizes chalk country, for instance around Salisbury Plain, and in Northern Ireland suddenly becomes abundant with the chalk around Dunluce Castle, Co. Antrim (where it is called the Flower of Dunluce). Chalk from gleaming hillside pits (which like chalk cliffs are always worth searching for fossilized sea-urchins and belemnites) has been quarried for centuries to burn into lime for

sweetening acid fields and for making into the now outmoded lime mortar. Dene-holes, and small pits, especially on chalk scarps, which appear now as grassy dells and dimples, provided chalk for marling or spreading directly on the land (see MARL-PITS).

From the Middle Ages to the last century chalk for buildings – often known as clunch – was quarried in many counties from the hard, mainly greyish, beds of the Lower Chalk, sawn into blocks, and dried out before the building began. It lasts well (so long as eaves project far enough to keep it clear, more or less, of rain), and was much used with dressings of brick, or on a footing (in Wiltshire) of sarsen stone. But the rather dingy grey-white of such chalk in churches, farmsteads, cottages, turns a dingier grey in damp weather. Two of the better chalk stones are dignified by names, the white Beer stone from underground quarries at Beer, in Devonshire, near Axminster, used far and wide in mediaeval cathedrals and churches, and Totternhoe stone (Totternhoe, on the Chilterns), greyish-green, a rough shelly chalk quarried for many Bedfordshire houses and villages. In Wessex chalk walls often surround a farm garden, the wall for its length carrying a little roof of thatch projecting on either side.

See also LIMEKILNS, LIMESTONES, RED CHALK.

**CHANCEL**. The holiest and most secret part of the mediaeval church, enshrining the main altar. Here beyond the chancel arch and the rood screen, which excluded the laity, the priest performed the offices. The reformers of the 16th century did not unite NAVE and chancel. They kept the screens and the wooden tympana on which the Last Judgement or DOOM had been painted (these were usually destroyed towards the middle of the 19th century), but they brought the laity into the chancel for the celebration of the Eucharist.

See also ALTARS, COMMUNION RAILS.

**CHANTRY CHAPELS**. The rich and illustrious who hoped to find a way to heaven would often leave property to establish and endow chapels of a special kind, to be built in churches around their tombs and effigies. They had much to fear after a possibly unvirtuous life. Prayer might help them to escape the avenging judgement of Doomsday, illustrated in the DOOM PAINTING, it might ease the cleansing journey of their souls through purgatory, which can be so well understood from the purgatorial terrors of the Lykewake Dirge (from the North Riding):

preferably sandy or peaty), it spreads and becomes dominant, sometimes as the undercover of a wood, and is exceedingly hard to get rid of. Like the HORSE CHESTNUT, this rhododendron with its purple flowers chimed with the Pre-Raphaelite feeling of the eighteenth-century that the English scene needed brilliance of colour – local colour, as in Pre-Raphaelite landscapes and subject-pieces.

**RICKS, STACKS, MOWS**, into which corn or hay (also peas and beans) are built after harvesting, either in the farmyard or the field, belong to very ancient farming practice. Mow and rick derive from the words the Anglo-Saxon farmer used, stack derives from the word used by the Norse-speaking settlers. But it seems that the varieties of shape, round, oval, rectangular, cannot be precisely traced to particular origins or districts. In Midland and southern counties and elsewhere ricks will often be built round and rectangular on the same farm, though it is true that the small round stacks are commoner in the rainier areas of north and west, and that round 'pikes' (i.e. tall pointed stacks built around a pole, as in other countries) now belong to the north rather than to the south. With their straw finials or dozzles and thatched roofs (now superseded by sheets of black plastic) ricks as a rule were given a house shape. The small circular stacks are perhaps remotely related to the round huts of prehistoric centuries, surviving in the damper and less fertile (and more conservative) areas, where the smaller size and the shape were ruled by the lower yields of hay and corn and were better fitted to the conditions of wind and weather. Even in the good corn and hay counties the landscape was probably not very extensively marked by ricks until the 18th century, when yields were increased by larger holdings and better farming until they were too much for the old storage space of the thatched barns. Storage in barns went with the flail, thumping on the threshing floor in the centre of each barn. The wheeled threshing machine of the 19th century driven from the flywheel of a traction engine was more easily fed from ricks.

See also BARNs, STADDLE-STONES.

**RIDGE-AND-FURROW.** See FIELDS.

**RIDGEWAY**, for an ancient track, is not a word coined by antiquaries looking wistfully but a little mistily back to the past, but a term descending to us from Old English and meaning exactly what

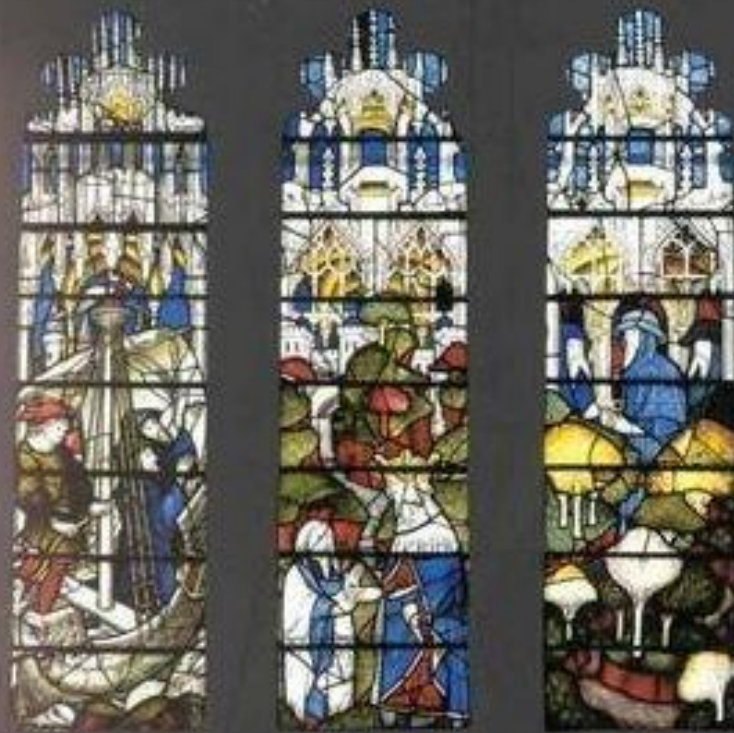
it says, a *hrycg weg*, a way or road along a ridge; and since ridges – especially long ridges of chalk or limestone athwart England from south-west to north-east – were likely to be clear of timber as well as dry and firm, and part of a landscape nibbled down by the sheep and goats and cattle of the early pastoralists, in contrast to the vales and plains likely to be wet, heavy, and dark with oak forest and thorn scrub, early man travelled by the ridges where possible; and ridge-ways became, and remained, by custom, long or short ways of communication. The best introduction to the exploration and understanding of ancient ridgeways and tracks will be found in two chapters of O. G. S. Crawford's *Archaeology in the Field* (1953) which begin by defining the track as 'not made or designed' but something which has grown 'in response to the need of going from one place to another', and stating that with a few exceptions all mediaeval roads (other than Roman roads still in mediaeval use) were 'natural tracks, unmetalled and wide'. He gives an account of four main pre-historic trackways or ridgeways which took the path of forest-free hill belts: (1) The Icknield Way, from near the Wash past Stonehenge to the Channel coast. (2) The ridgeway of the South Downs from the neighbourhood of Beachy Head to Stonehenge and beyond. (3) The North Downs ridgeway from the Canterbury neighbourhood, part of it the so-called Pilgrims Way, then the Harrow Way to Stonehenge (*?hearg weg*, Old English for 'temple way'), then south-west, perhaps skirting Dartmoor and along the spine of Cornwall. (4) The 'Jurassic Way', recognized in modern times as running south and south-west from the Humber, crossing the Cotswolds to Bath and continuing possibly along the Mendips. Partly modern roads or lanes, including GREEN LANES, partly adapted as modern roads, partly discernible as boundary lines of parish or estate, these are to be regarded as ancient trading thoroughfares, much trodden in the Iron Age (passing Iron Age hill-forts), but probably used in the Bronze Age and earlier, Stonehenge being on the route of the first three. The 'Jurassic Way' (a way across the limestone formation) crosses the surface iron deposits of Northamptonshire and north Oxfordshire. The other three skirt known groups of neolithic FLINT MINES.

As well as these and other chief ridgeways, minor ridgeways can be traced with tolerable certainty in county after county, many of them still in use, metalled or unmetalled. *Ancient Trackways of Wessex* (1965) by H. W. Timperley and Edith Brill attempts to define the

major and minor ridgeways of Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Berkshire, including what the authors call the Great Ridgeway (best known from the ridgeway across the Berkshire and Wiltshire downs above the Uffington White Horse and past Wayland's Smithy, which has usually been considered as a loop of the Icknield Way), which they trace from the Thames near Streatley to the Channel coast at the mouth of the Axe.

See also HOLLOW WAYS, PORT WAYS, ROADS, SALT WAYS.

# ENGLAND'S THOUSAND BEST CHURCHES



SIMON JENKINS

With photographs from the **COUNTRY LIFE** Archive





DAVID MILES

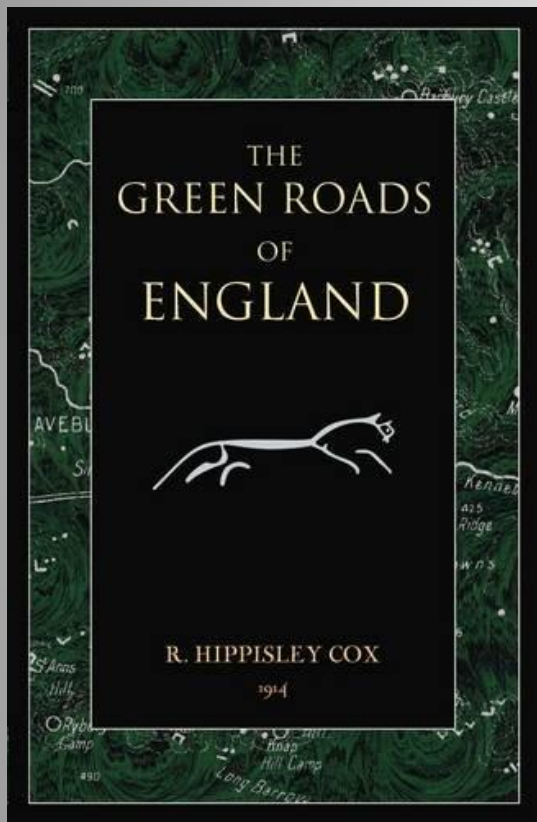
THE  
LAND  
OF THE  
WHITE  
HORSE

VISIONS OF ENGLAND

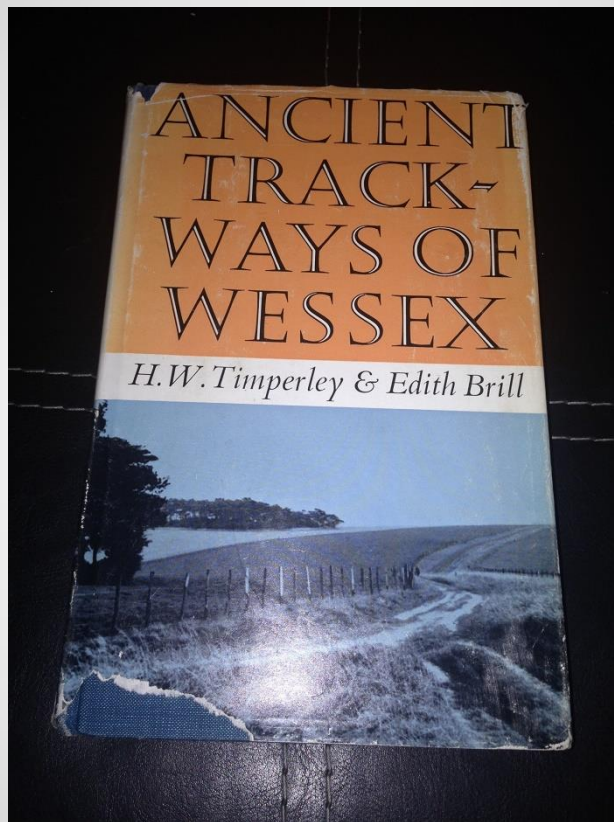
Thames & Hudson



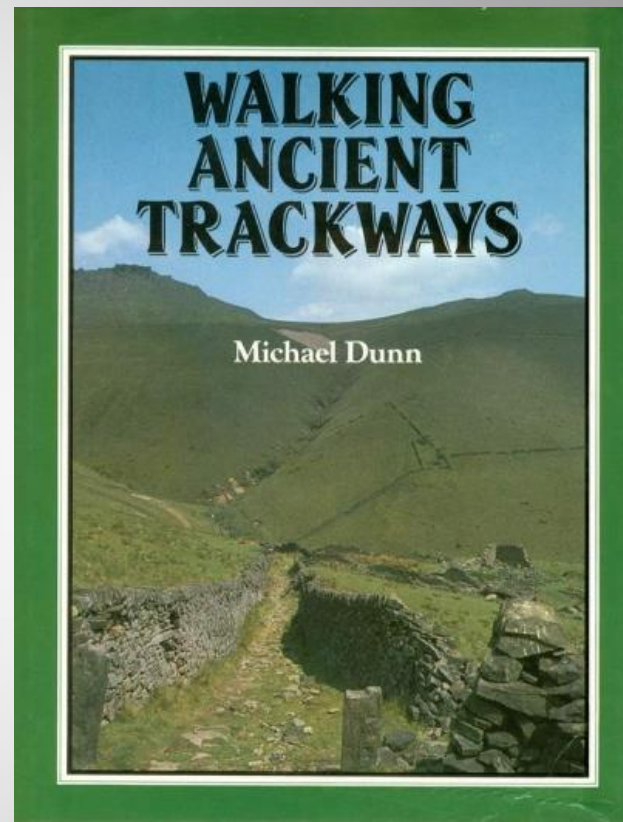
## GUIDES TO THE TRACKWAYS—



Romantic and unreliable



Systematic and thorough



Recent and useful



# WALKING ANCIENT TRACKWAYS

Michael Dunn

Thousands of miles of ancient trackways – from prehistoric ridgeways and Roman roads to Saxon herepaths and medieval saltways – survive undisturbed in the British countryside. This book offers thirty-four walks exploring the best that these ancient roads can offer.

Many of the routes were primarily used in one period – the magnificent Roman road, Ackling Dyke, in Dorset, is one example. Many more, however, have seen a succession of travellers through the centuries. Sewstern Lane in eastern Leicestershire is typical, having originated as a prehistoric track but having also been used by the Romans, medieval traders, the Dukes of Rutland on their way to London, and eighteenth-century drovers.

The walks included range from challenging expeditions along the High Street range in the Lake District and over the Corrieyairack Pass in Scotland to gentle strolls along a saltway in the Cotswolds and a Roman road in Kent. Spectacular and well-known walks such as Clennell Street in the Cheviots and the drovers' Hambleton Street in north Yorkshire contrast with less famous but equally rewarding routes following the Kerry Ridgeway to Bishops Castle and tracing packhorse routes in the Peak District.

The route of each trackway is described in some detail, and there are informative notes on the historical background of the route and entertaining comments on points of interest along the way. The text is complemented by superb colour and black-and-white photographs, attractive line illustrations and excellent sketch maps. The result is a marvellous introduction to a series of uniquely satisfying walks through the history of the British landscape.

## CONTENTS

1	Ancient Walks – and how to walk them	7
2	The Pilgrims' Way	13
3	The Roman Road from Rochester to Hastings	19
4	The Icknield Way	25
5	Green Street – the Wiltshire Herepath	31
6	The Ridgeway	36
7	The Salisbury Way	41
8	Ackling Dyke	47
9	The Mariners Way	55
10	The Abbot's Way	61
11	The Exmoor Ridgeway	69
12	The Roman Road from Neath to Brecon	74
13	Sarn Helen (East)	81
14	The Kerry Hills Ridgeway	88
15	The Old Penrhyn Road	95
16	Walling Street (West)	101
17	The Fosse Way	107
18	A Cotswold Saltway	113
19	Via Devana (Wool Street)	119
20	Peddars Way	125
21	A Medieval Road in Cambridgeshire	132
22	Gartree Road	139
23	Sewstern Lane	145
24	High Dike	151
25	The Old Portway	157
26	Packhorse Ways in the Peak District	163
27	Wade's Causeway	171
28	The Hambleton Drove Road	177
29	The Old Craven Way	185
30	High Street	191
31	Clennell Street	197
32	Drove Roads in Southern Scotland	203
33	The Mounth Road	209
34	The Corrieyairack Road	216
35	Bridge of Orchy to Fort William by Military Road	223
	Index	230







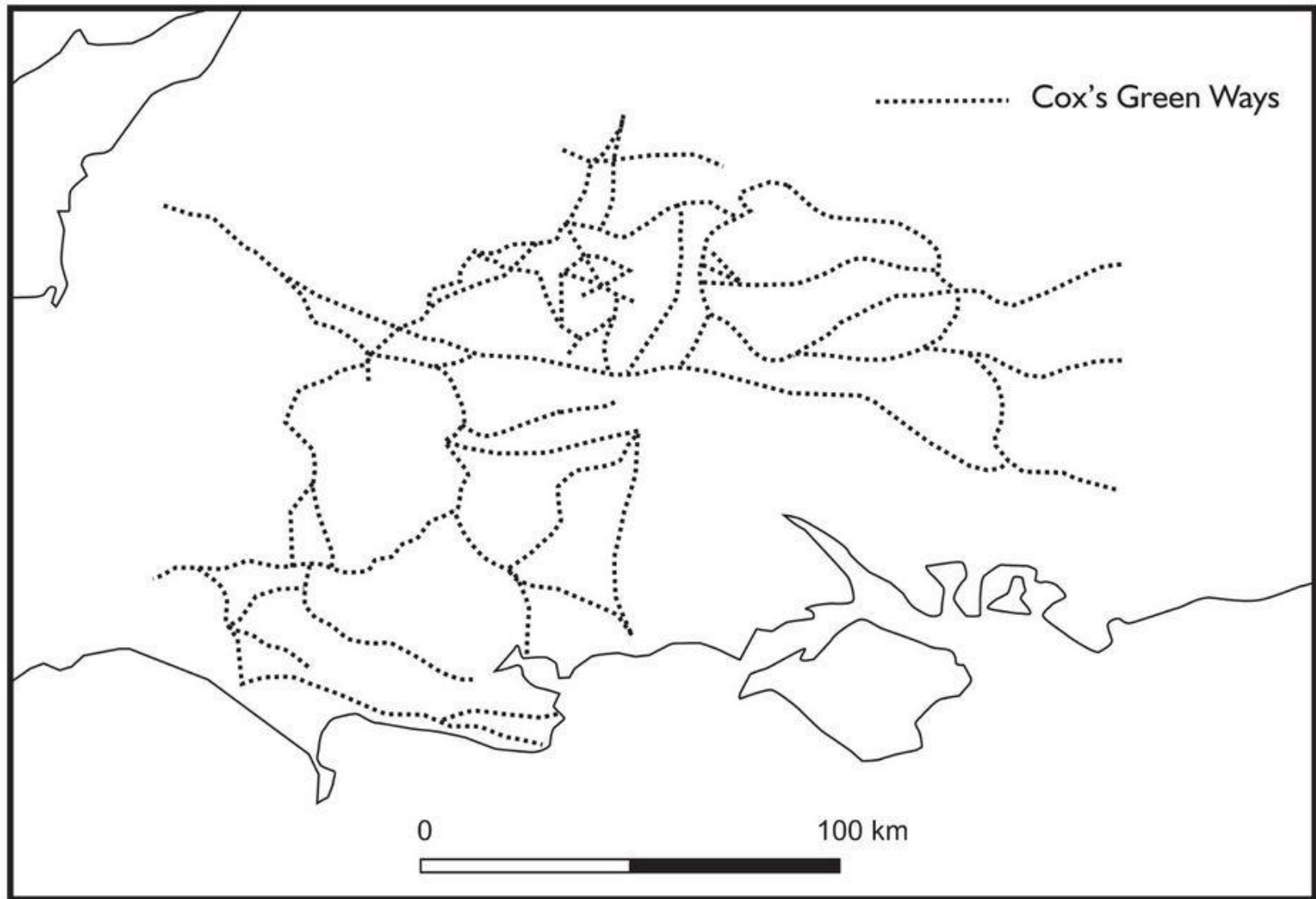


Figure 2: The prehistoric trackways of central southern England according to Hipsley Cox (1944).

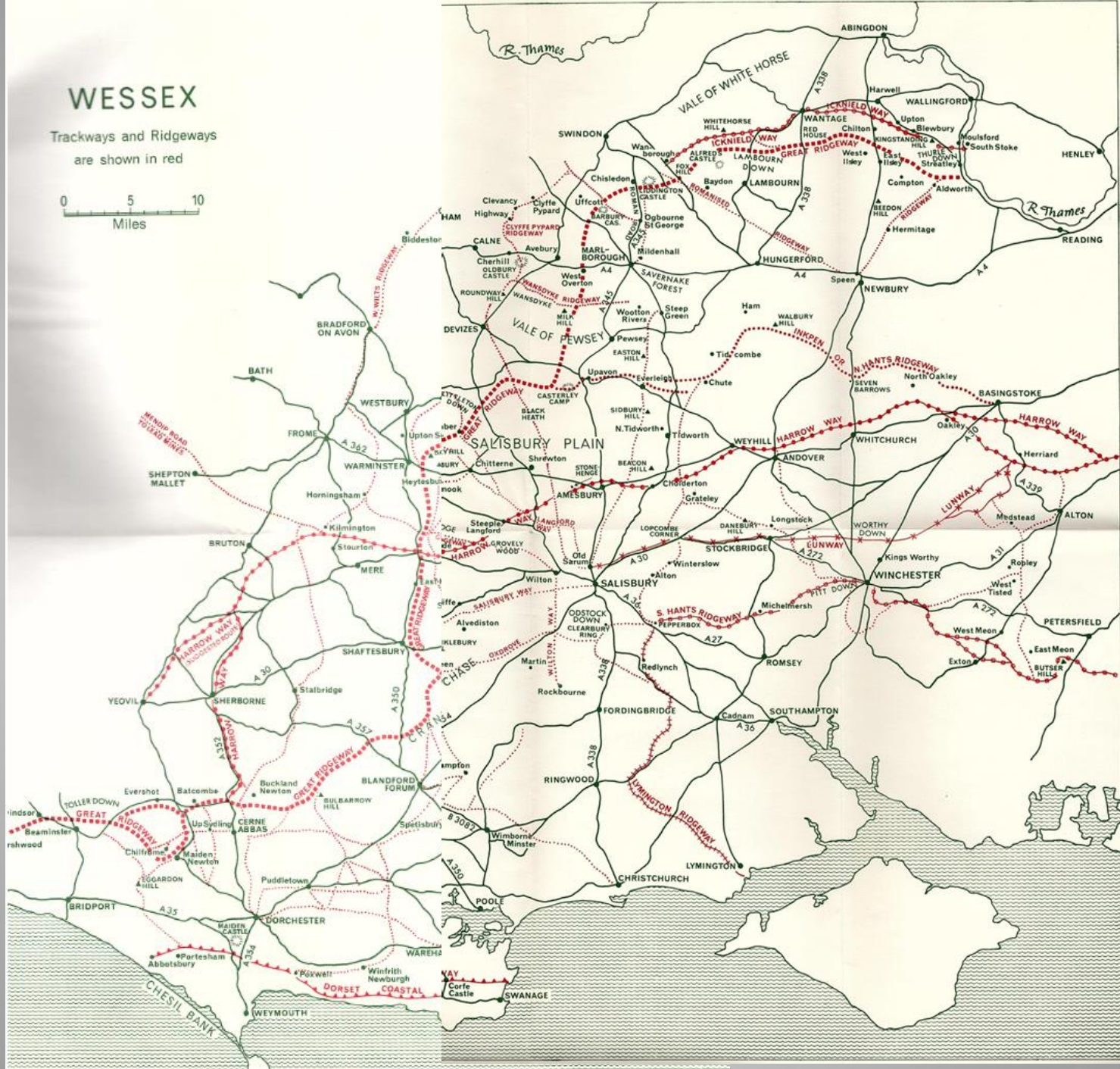
# WESSEX

Trackways and Ridgeways  
are shown in red



# WESSEX

Trackways and Ridgeways  
are shown in red

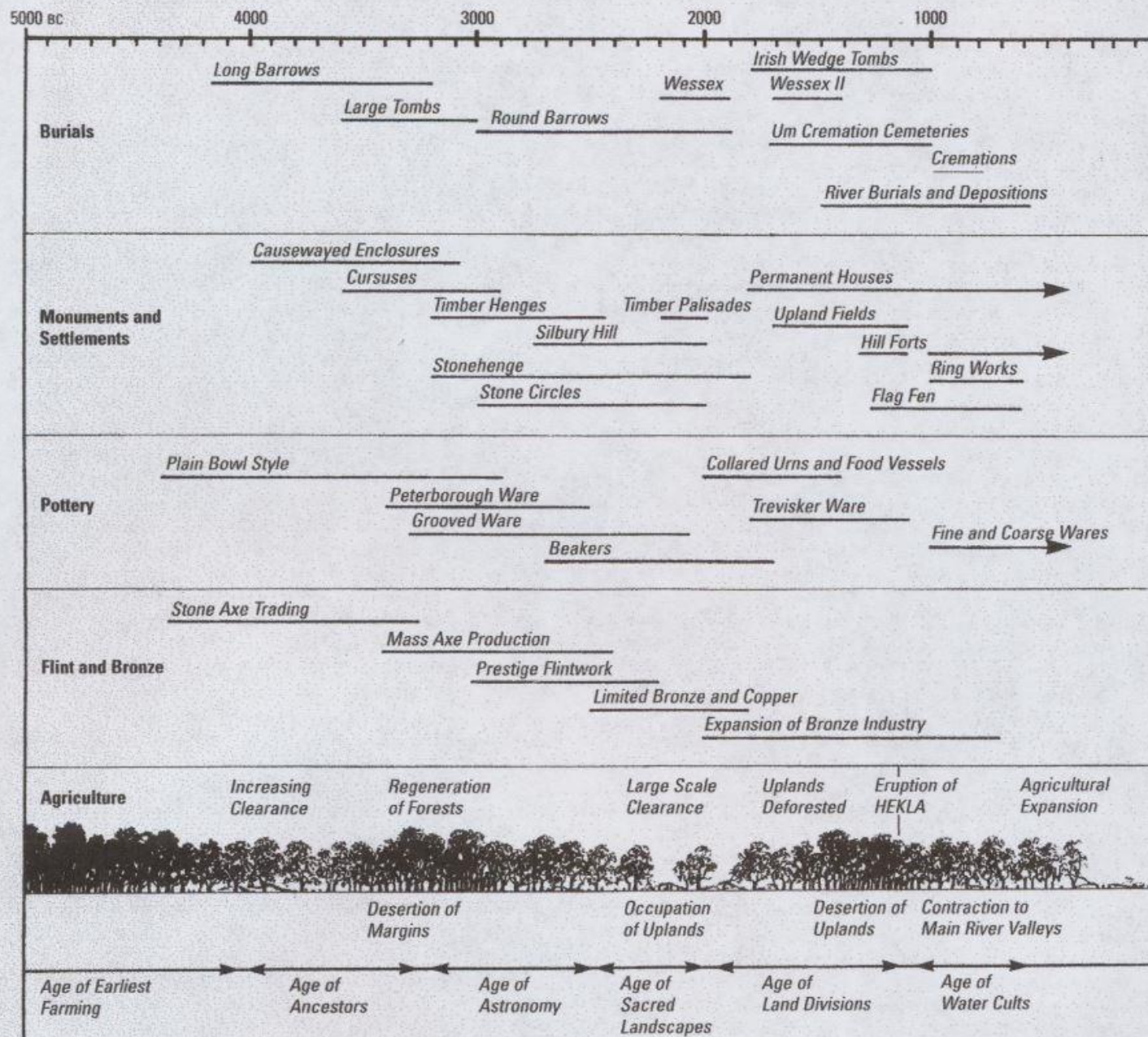


A guide to the  
Prehistoric and  
Roman Monuments  
in England & Wales

*A New Edition  
Revised and with new Illustrations*

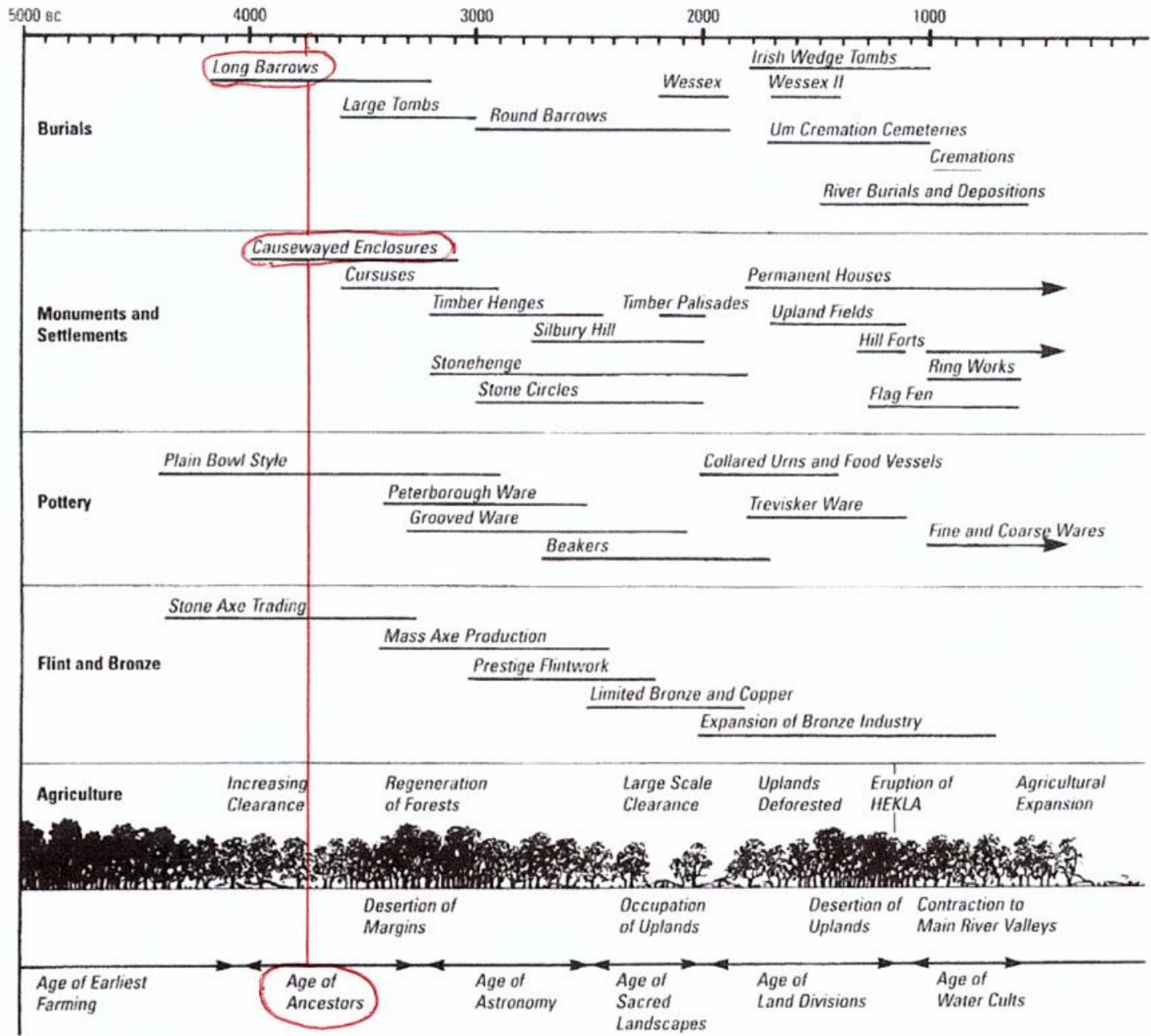
Jacquetta Hawkes

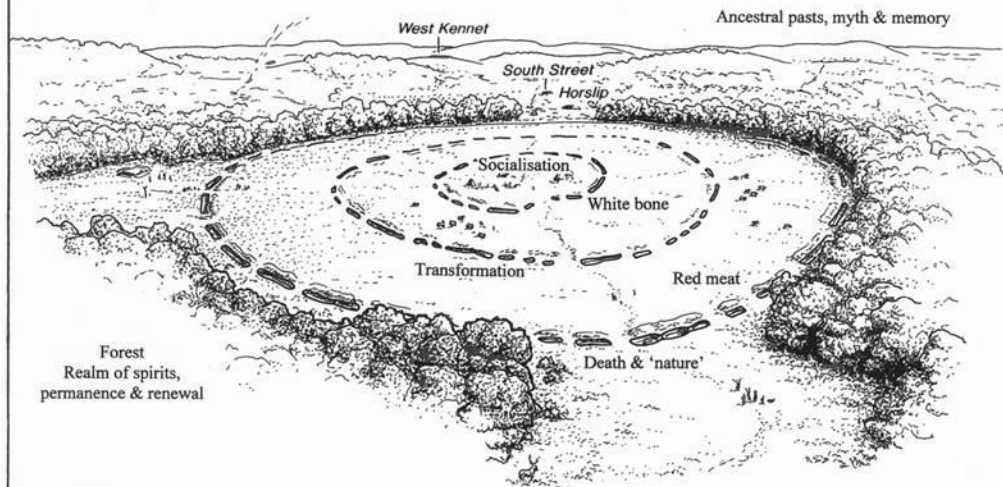




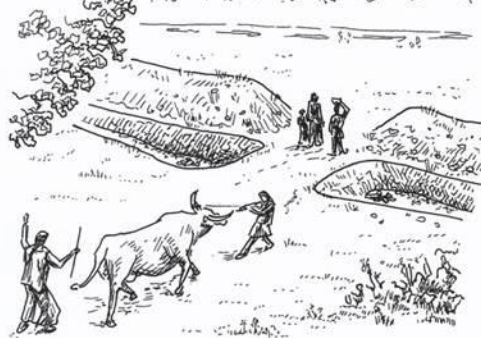
79 (above) Time chart showing main trends and changes.







### Gathering



Periodic gathering of dispersed communities;  
collective values enhanced through construction  
& participation

### Participation



Formation of alliances; settling of disputes;  
exchange; collective ritual; feasting

Sacrifice, transformation (of people, animals  
& objects)

Deposition, renewal & regeneration

### Deposition





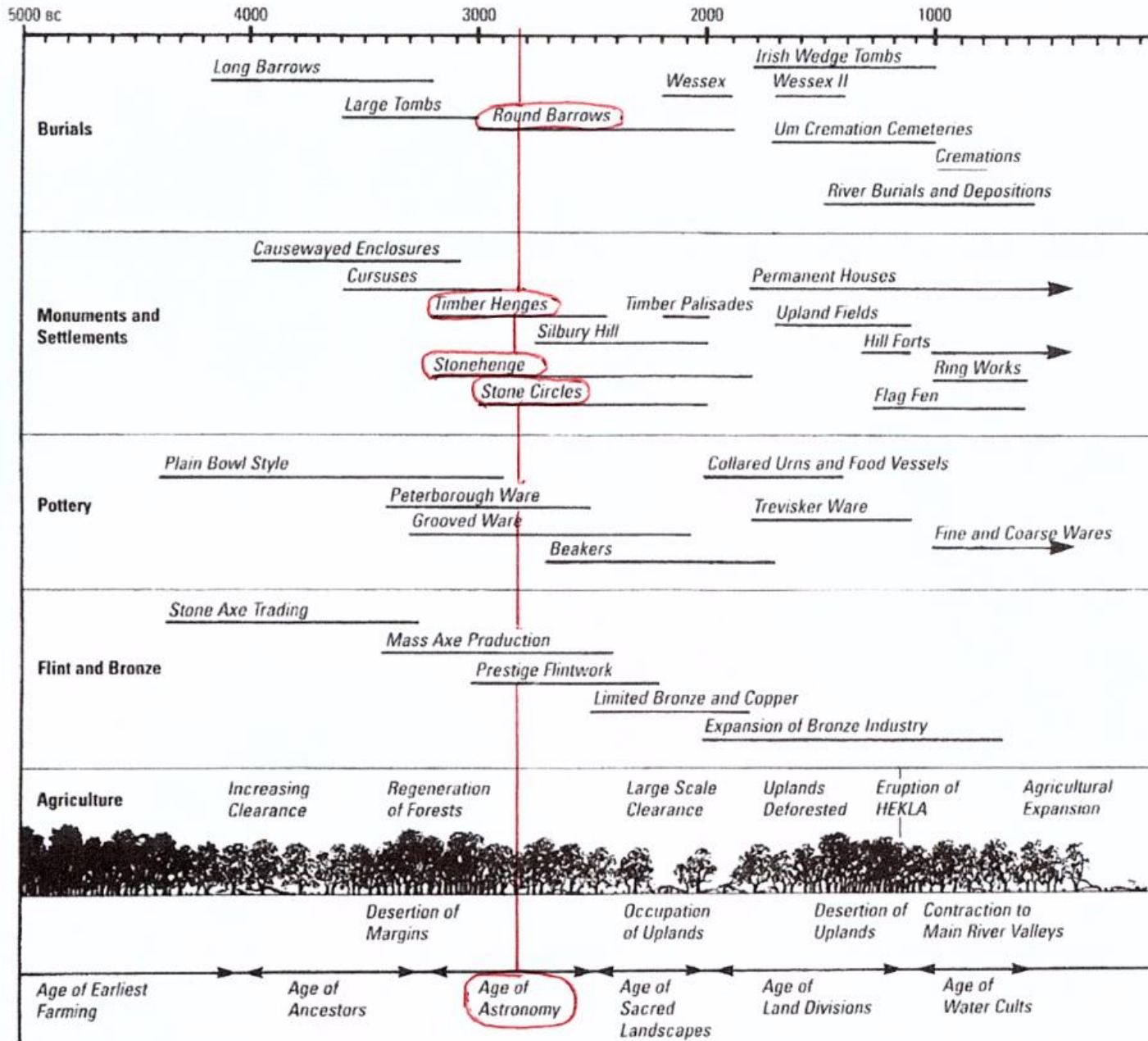
## **West Kennet Long Barrow**

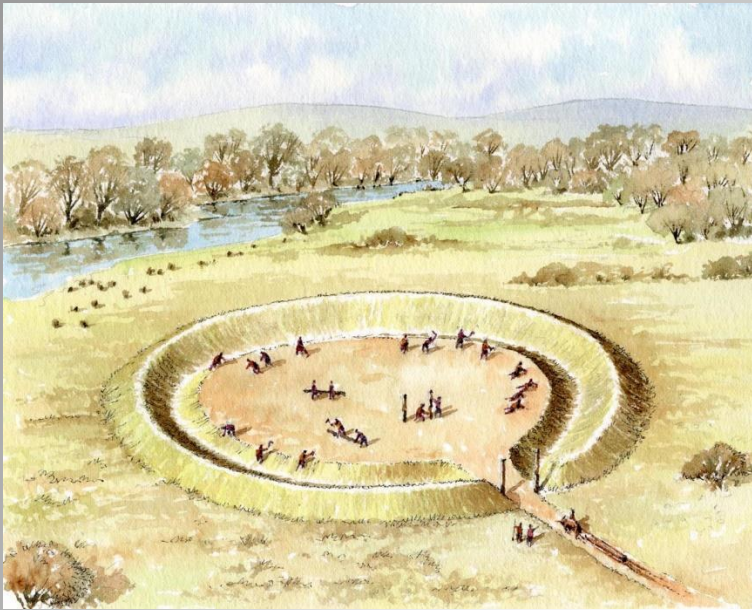
Near Avebury



## Wayland's Smithy

On the Ridgeway





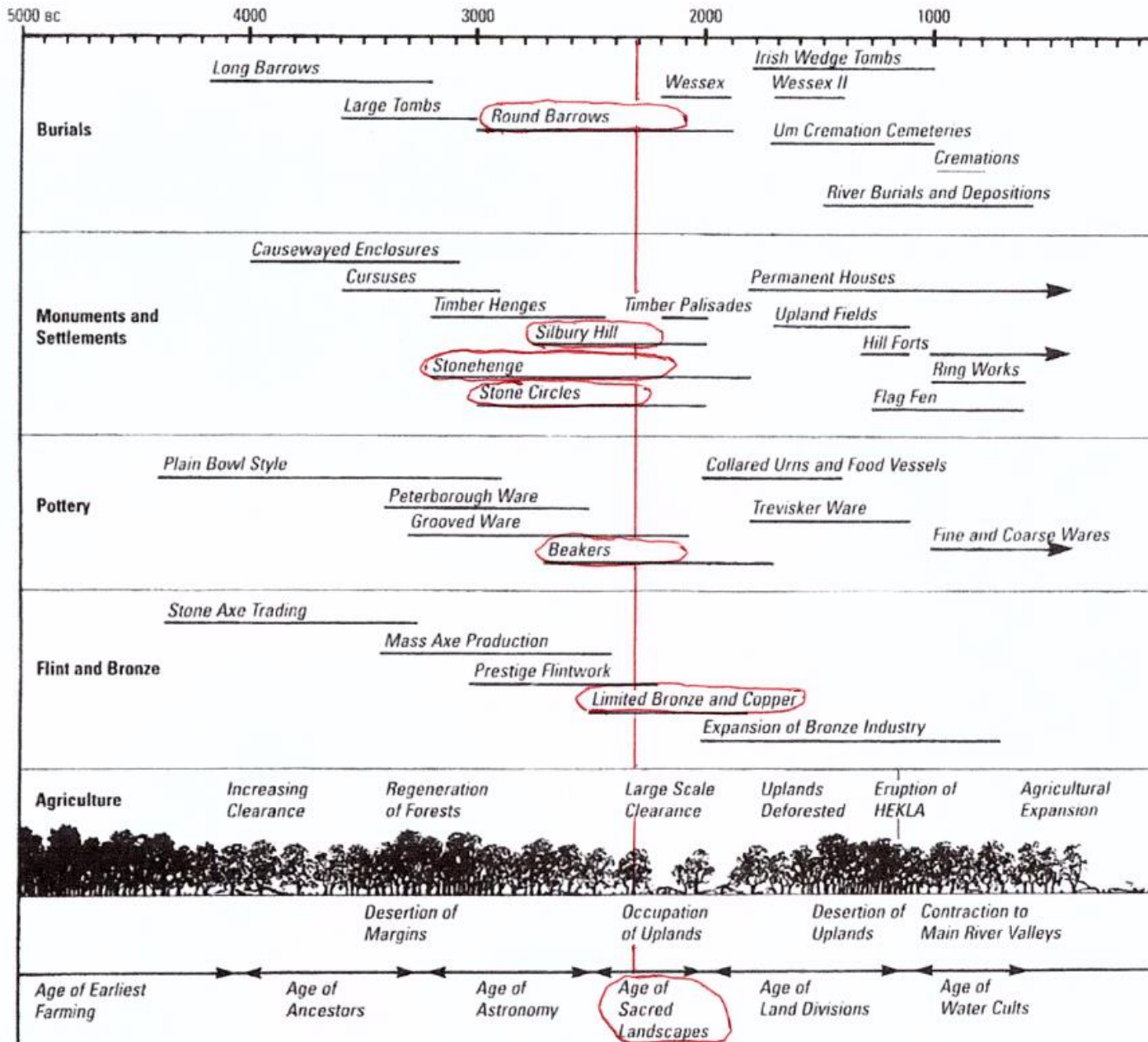
**Henge**



**Stone Circle**



**Stone Circle inside Henge**



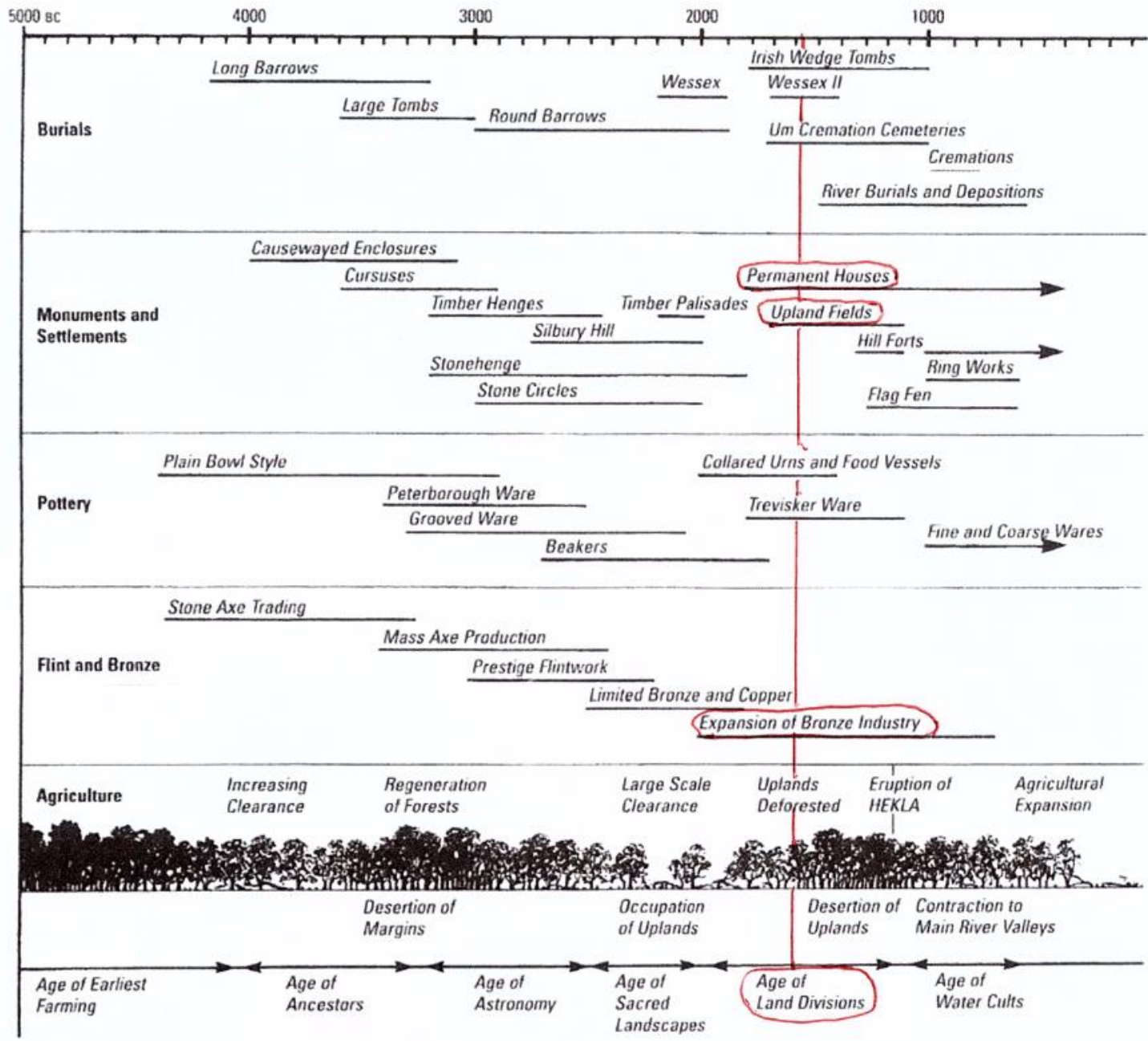


**Round Barrows**



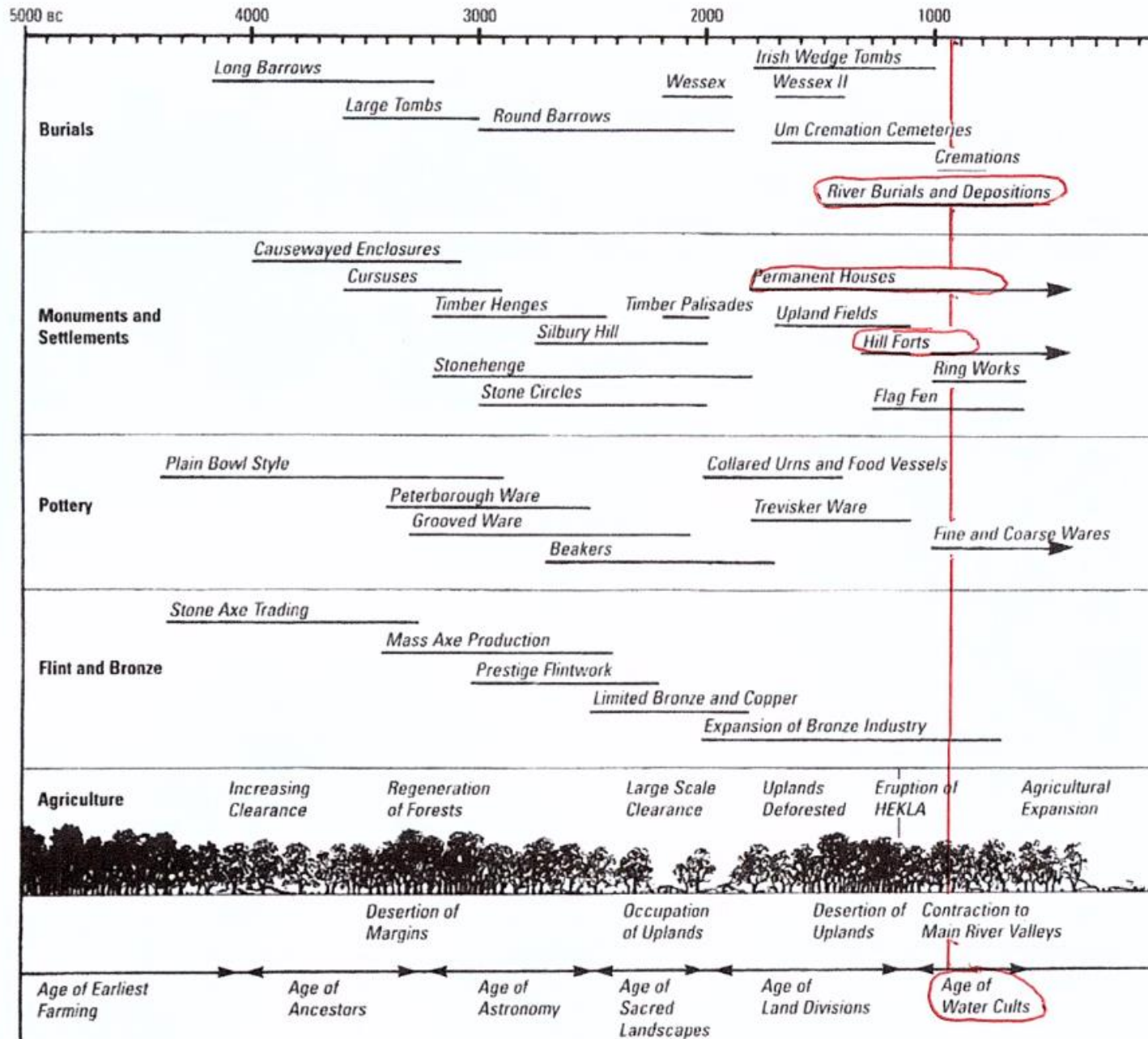
**Cairns**







2.1 Air photographic transcription by the RCJME of the field archaeology of Avebury, Overton, Fyfield and Mottes Down, differentially and variously visible as earthworks, submarks and cropmarks. The Ridgeway and out, Doley Copse, Ironstone Wood, Wroughton Copse and The Beches, were not part of the 'ancient landscape' depicted and are shown purely for locational purposes (base map reproduced from the 2000 1:20,000 permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, © Crown Copyright/MC 0100030706; air photographic transcription © Crown copyright, NMR)





6.6 The henge monument of Avebury on the north Wiltshire chalkland. The great enclosing bank and ditch survive remarkably intact. A number of the standing stones that can be seen were re-erected in the 1930s. The village spreading into the monument dates from the late Saxon period



★ **Avebury, Neolithic henge, stone circles and avenue**

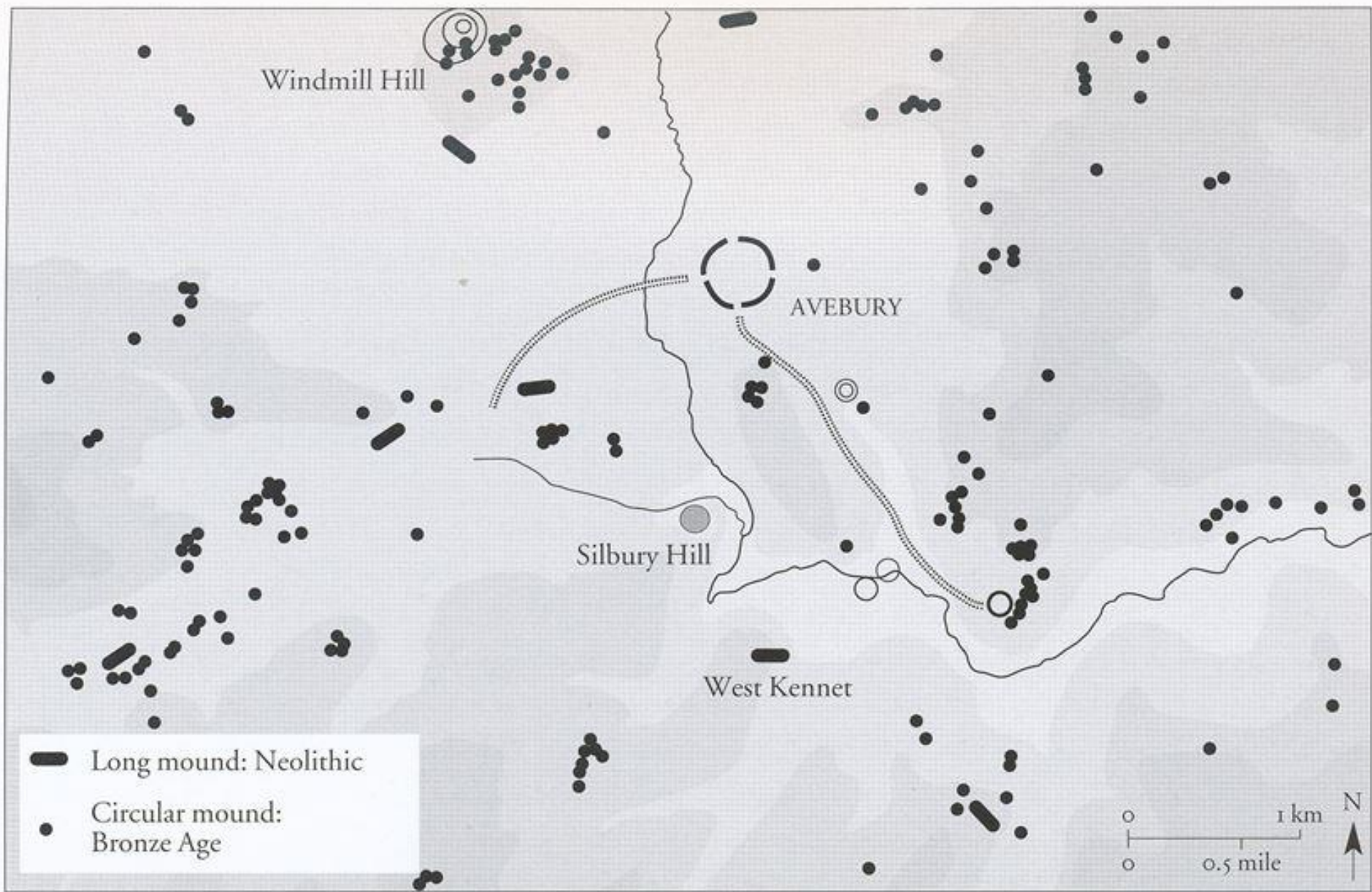
This is one of the most important megalithic sites in Europe and is designated a World Heritage Site. The site is approached by an avenue of stones and features a large circular earthwork some 400 metres wide and an external ditch with a circumference of 1200 metres. Inside are two more stone circles, each of 100 metres in diameter.

Many of the stones were re-erected in the 1930s by Alexander Keiller, and the site museum provides information on this and the archaeological story of Avebury.

*(English Heritage, National Trust and Private owner)*

Photo: © Crown copyright: English Heritage NMR





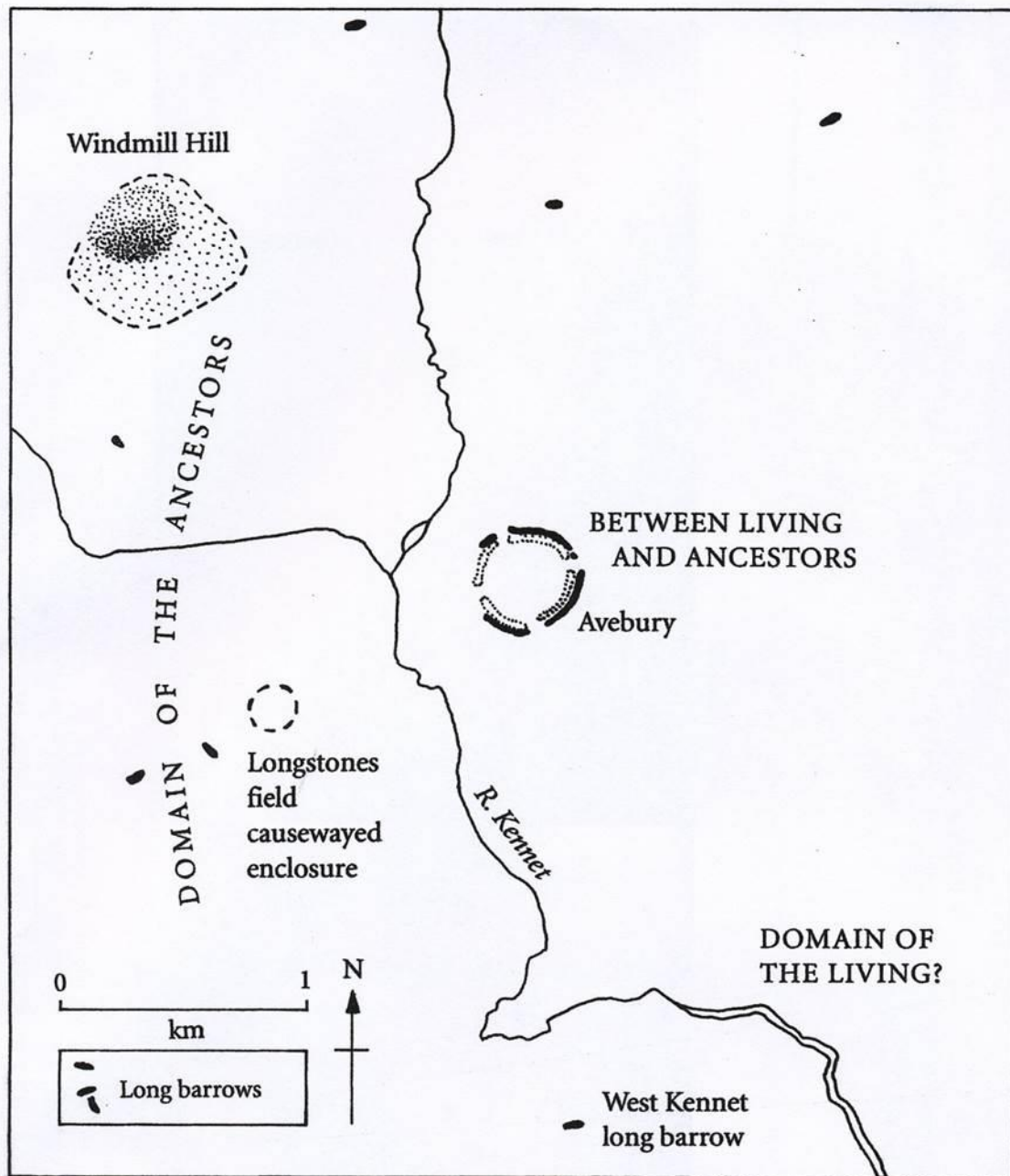


FIG 48 *Layout of the Avebury ritual landscape, 3500–2500 BC.*

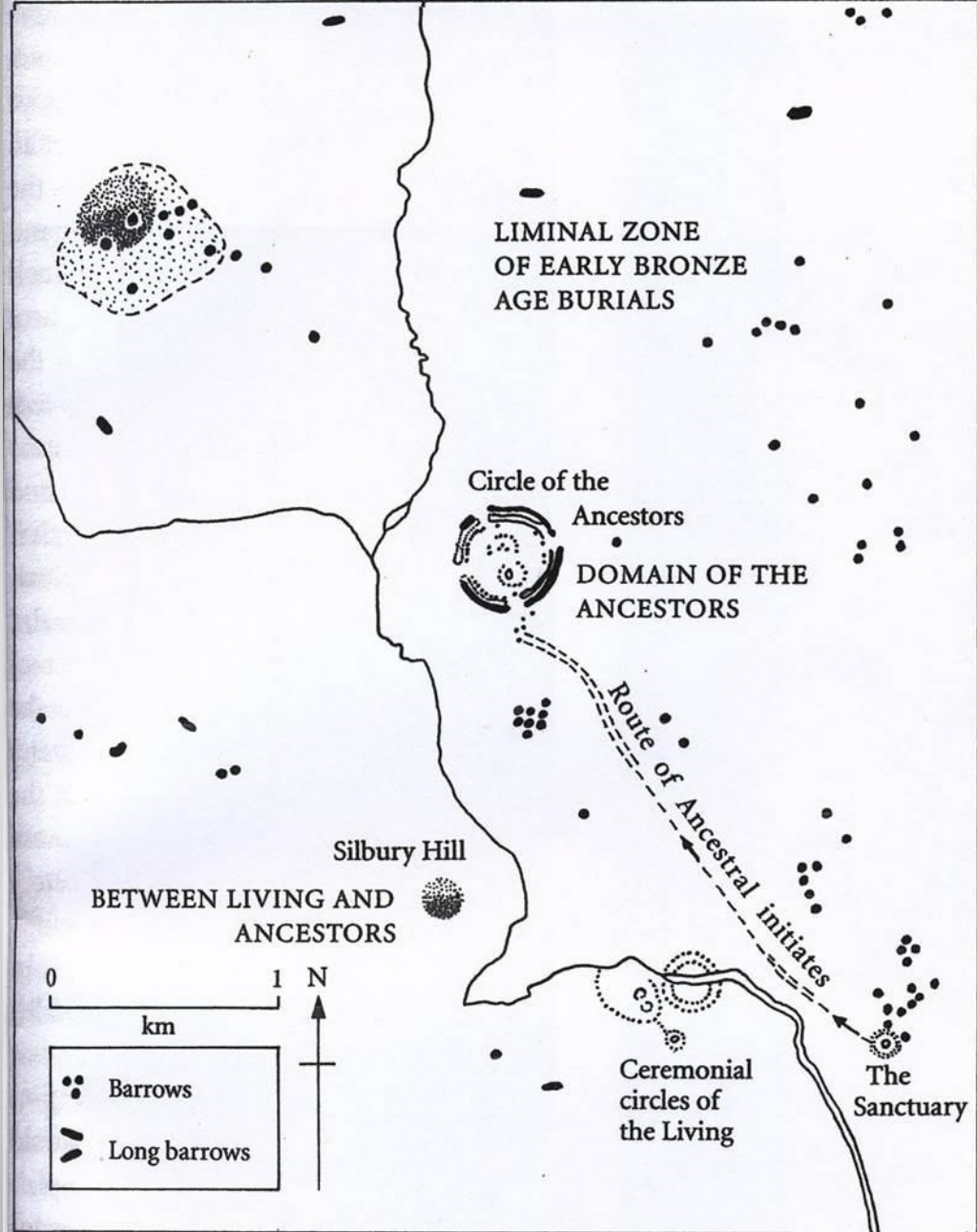
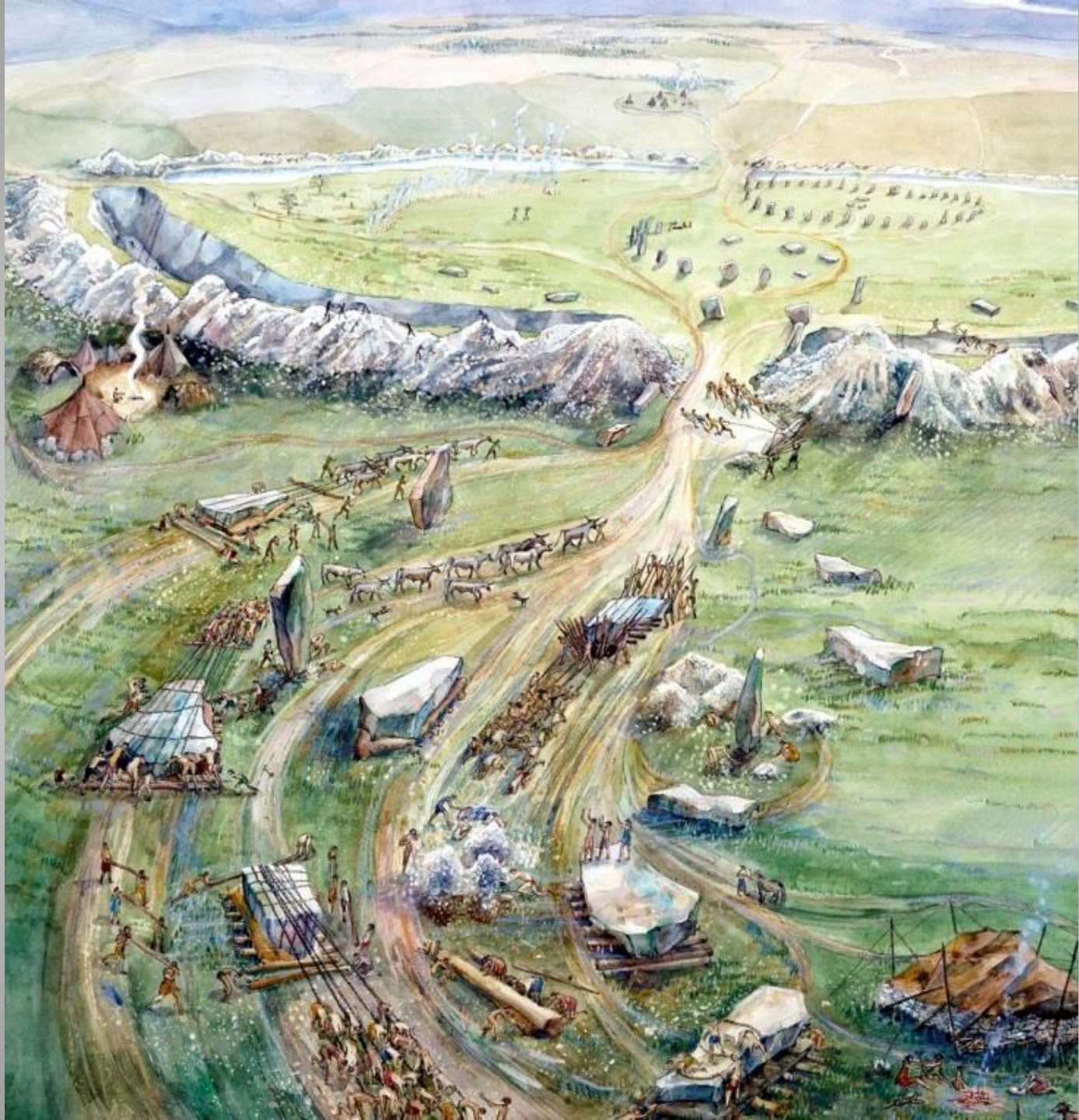


FIG 49 *Layout of the Avebury ritual landscape, 2500–2000 BC.*



12 (Below) Avebury: the Cove, a setting of two (originally three) massive blocks at the centre of the northern inner circle (visible in the background). Recent investigations have shown that the stone on the left continues at least 2 m (6.5 ft) below the surface and weighs an estimated 100 tonnes, making it by far the largest megalithic block at Avebury.



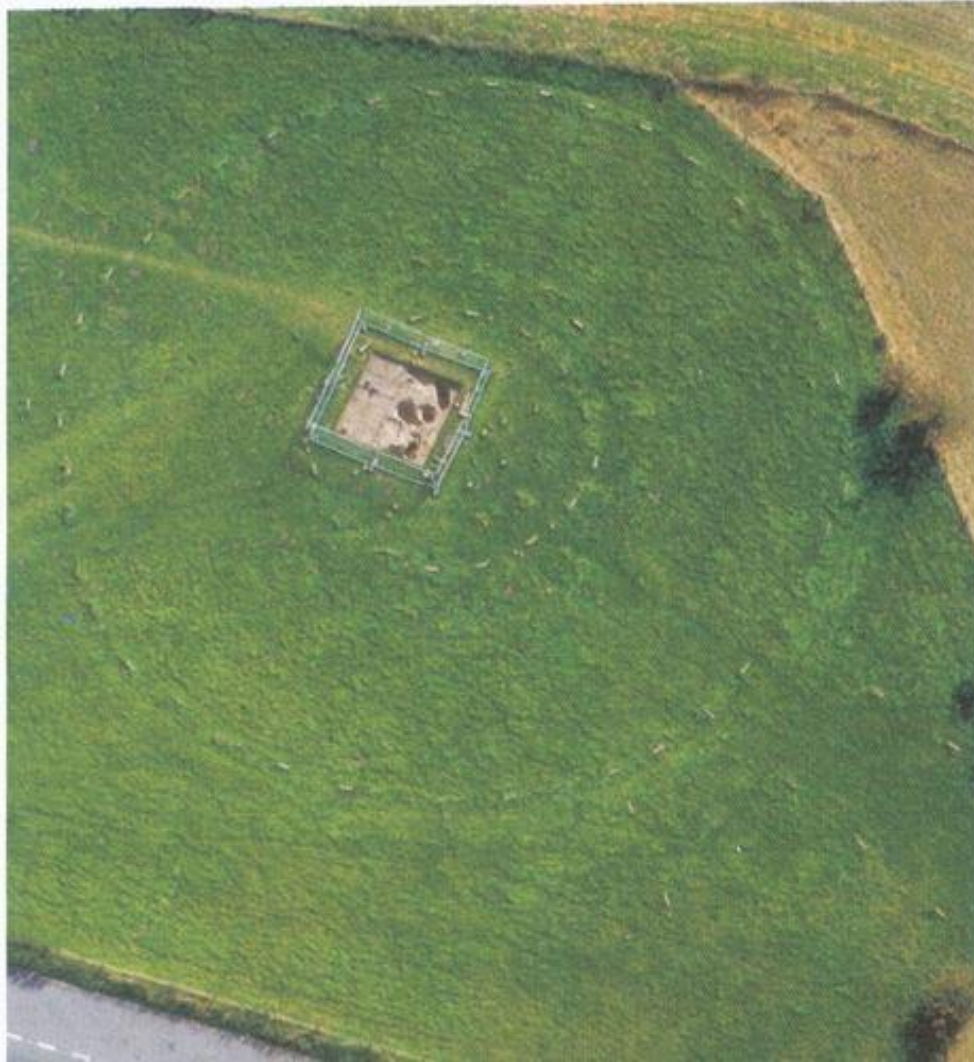








**57 (below) The Sanctuary at Avebury during excavation in 1999. The concentric circles of pits (some visible in the excavation) held timber posts. Two stone circles (represented today by concrete blocks) were also erected, probably later than the posts but at the same time as the stones of the West Kennet Avenue.**



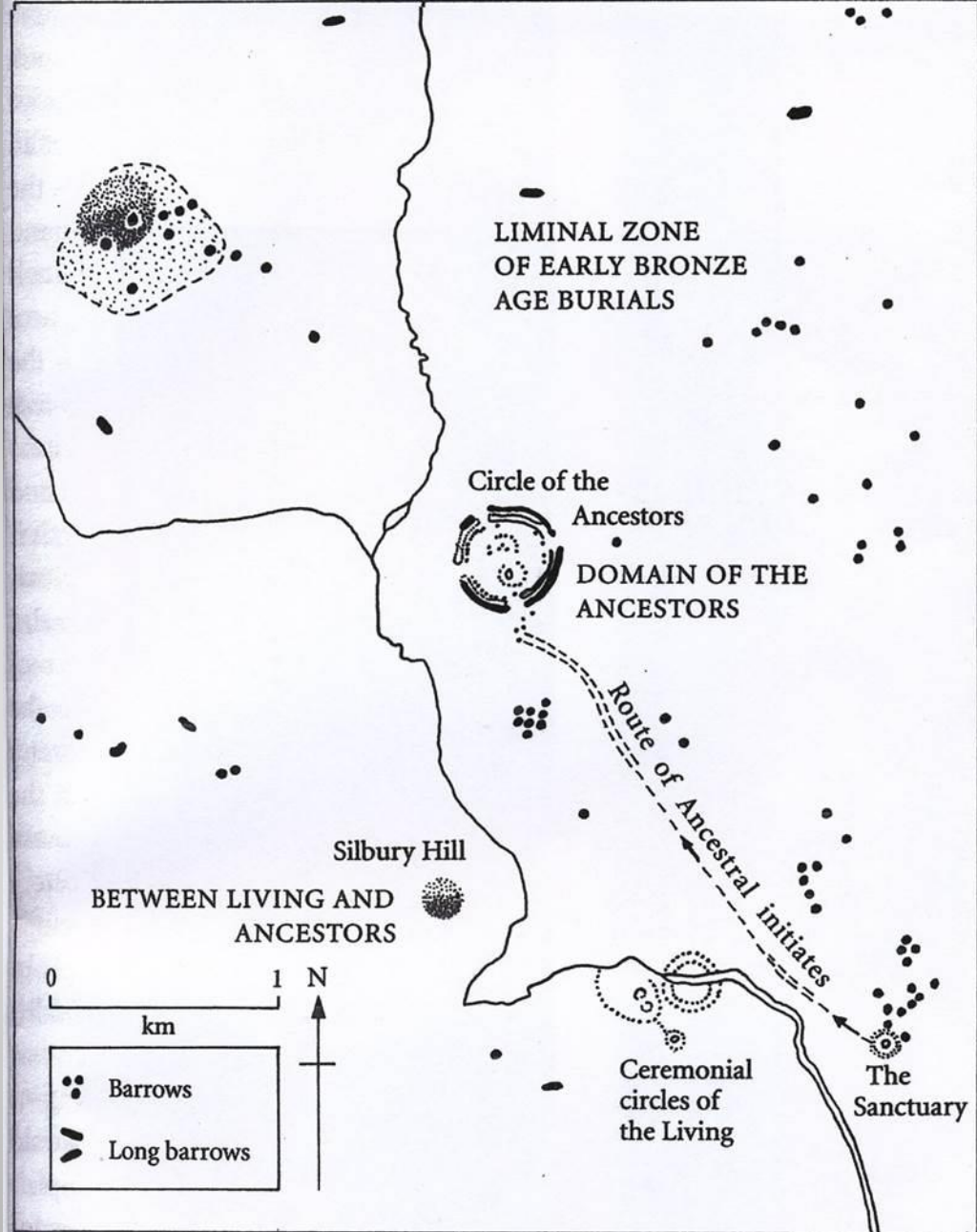


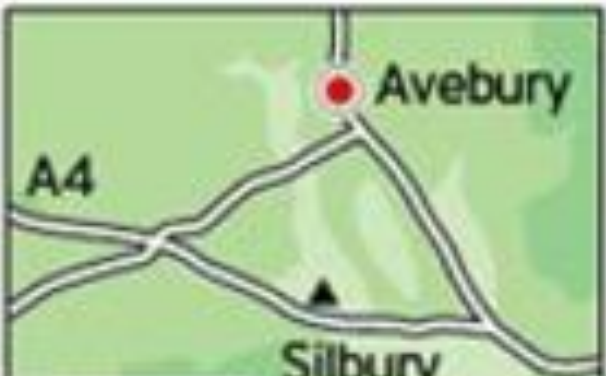
FIG 49 *Layout of the Avebury ritual landscape, 2500–2000 BC.*





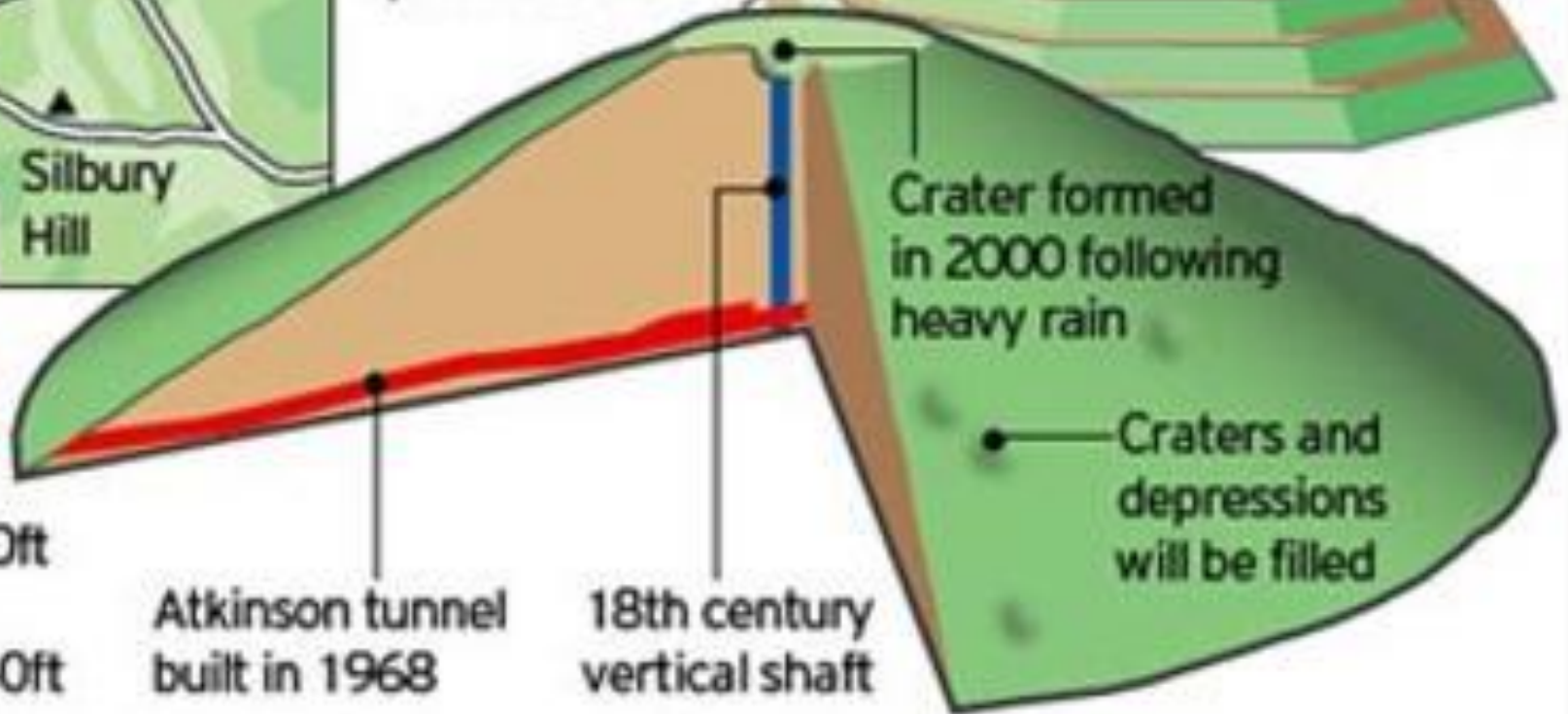






Silbury Hill  
Height: 130ft  
Diameter  
at base: 550ft

Original hill is thought to have been built in a spiral fashion



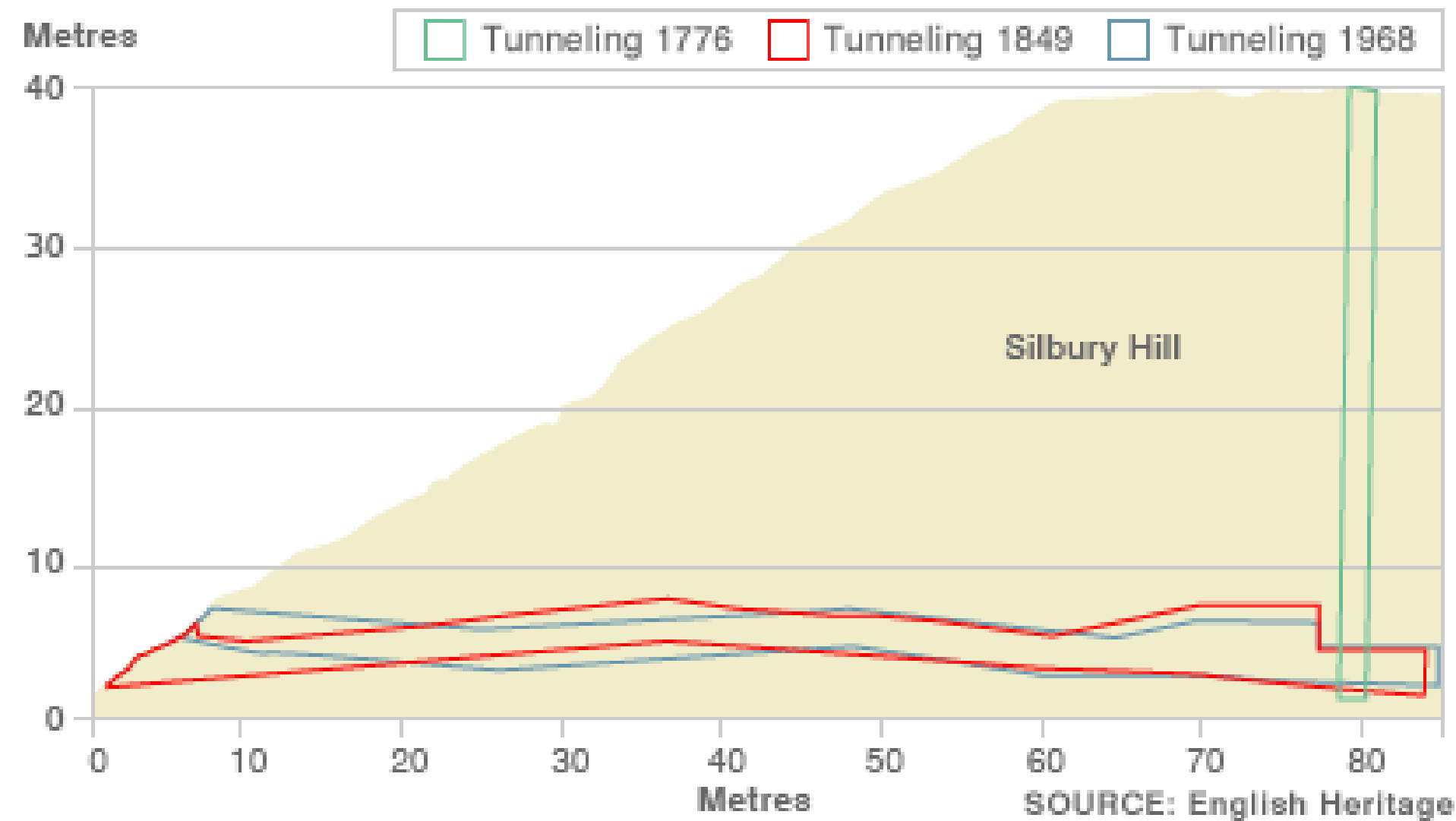
Atkinson tunnel  
built in 1968

18th century  
vertical shaft

Crater formed  
in 2000 following  
heavy rain

Craters and  
depressions  
will be filled

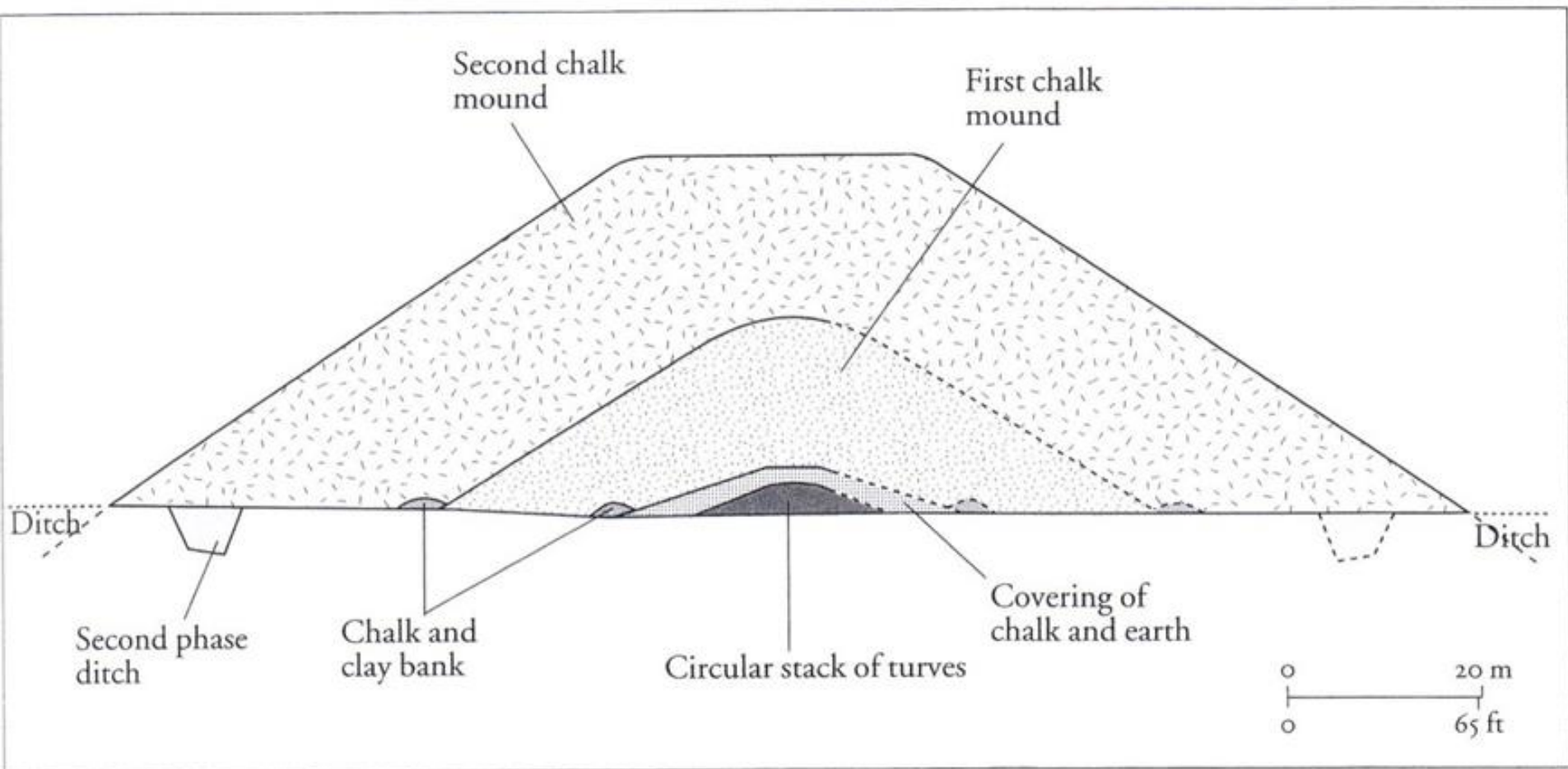
# SILBURY HILL TUNNELS



SOURCE: English Heritage







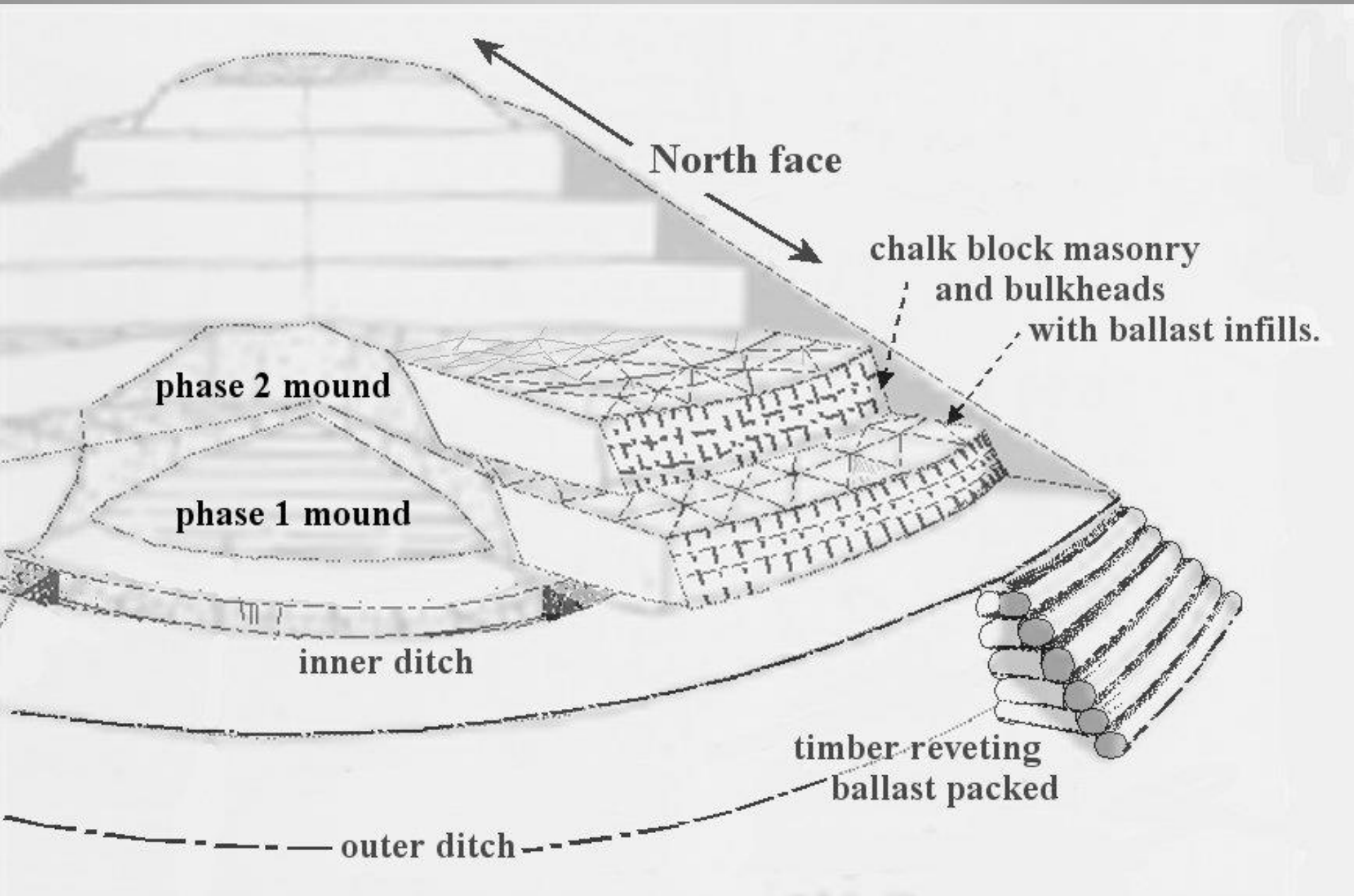


The first construction at Silbury was a low mound of gravel. Later, a series of layers of soil, mud and grass turves were added. Several pits were dug into the mound and it may have been edged by stakes.





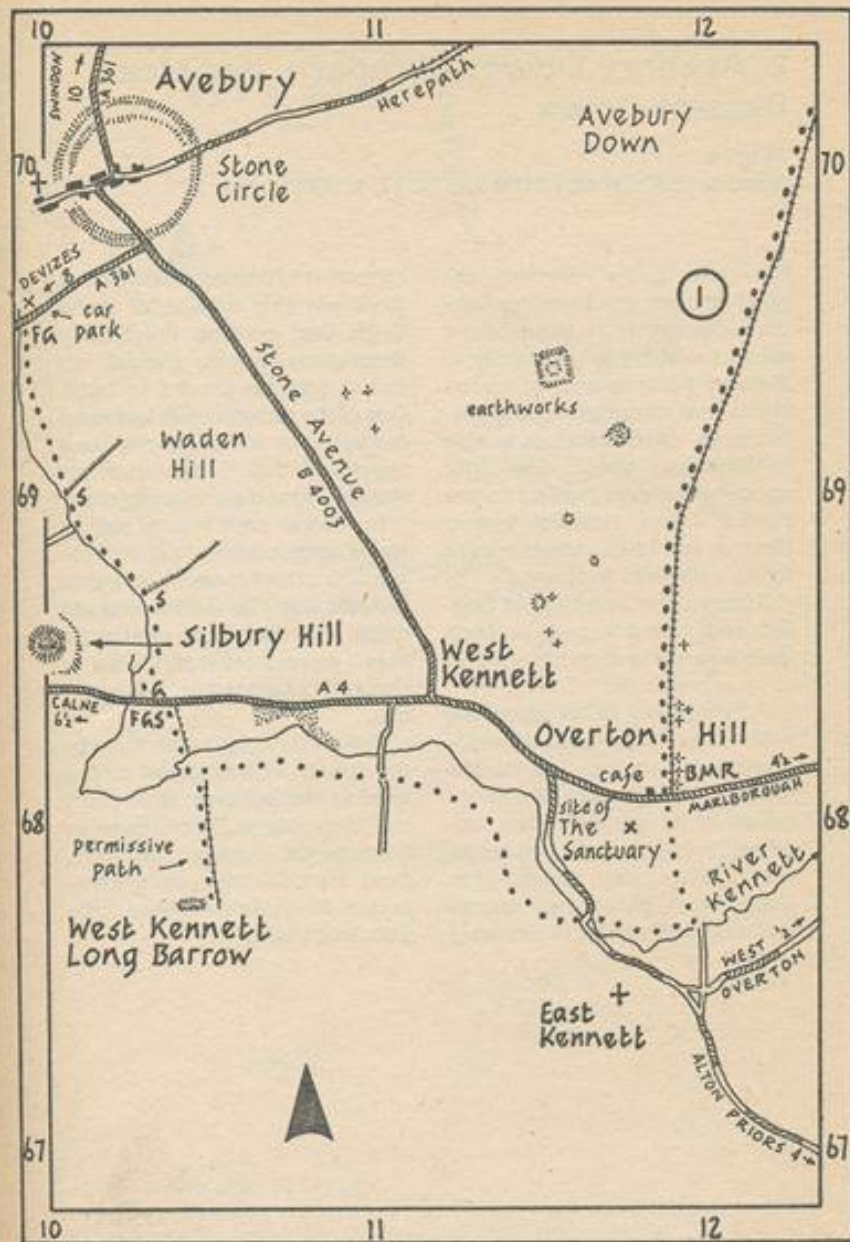
Later, construction continued in chalk and clay, which was piled around the mound, sometimes in small banks. The mound was surrounded by a ditch with an internal bank.











# The Ridgeway Path

