

NEOLITHIC BRITAIN

New stone age sites of England, Scotland
and Wales

Rodney Castleden

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Wales

Rodney Castleden

Illustrated by the author



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To Aubrey Burl

A wander witt of Wiltshire, rambling to Rome to gaze at Antiquities, and there skewing himself into the company of Antiquaries, they entreated him to illustrate unto them that famous Monument in his Country, called **Stonage**. His answer was that he had never seen, scarce ever heard of, it. Whereupon, they kicked him out of doors, and bade him goe home, and see **Stonage**.

Robert Gay: *A Fools Bolt Soon Shott
at Stonage* (about 1665)

I never saw the Country about Marlborough, till Christmas 1648. Mr Charles Seymour and Sir William Button of Tokenham (a most parkely ground, and a Romancy-place) Baronet, mett with their packs of Hounds at the Greyweathers. . . . One might fancy it to have been the Scene where the Giants fought with stones against the Gods. 'Twas here that our Game began: and the chase led us through the Village of Aubury, into the Closes there: where I was wonderfully surprised at the sight of those vast stones, of which I had not heard before; as also at the mighty Banke and Graffe about it. I observed in the Inclosures some segments of rude circles, made with these stones, whence I concluded, they had been in old time complete.

John Aubrey: *Topographical Collections*
(written in the 1660s)

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Aubrey Burl, the Rock of Ages in British neolithic studies, is an inspiration to all prehistorians. In his steady output of publications he has supplied us with profound insights into the nature of life in neolithic Britain, with an unusual combination of patient research and vivid writing. I am particularly grateful to him for his kind words about my book *The Stonehenge People* when his own book, with the same title, had come out only a month or two before, and for his patience in answering my questions about stone circles. It seemed natural, from the planning stage onwards, that this book should be dedicated to him.

Finally, I thank my wife, Kit, for coming with me to see many of the sites and enduring the rigours of some extraordinary British summers, from the drenching rainstorms of Orkney in 1986 to the blistering heat of Dorset in 1990.

R.C.
Brighton, 1991

INTRODUCTION: 'SAYING IT WITH STONE'

The celebrated seventeenth-century diarist, courtier and antiquary, John Aubrey, stumbled on Avebury by chance while out hunting in 1648 and expressed surprise 'that so eminent an Antiquitie should lye so long unregarded by our Chorographers'. In about 1663, in Aubrey's own words,

King Charles IId discoursing one morning with my Lord Brounker and Dr Charleton concerning Stoneheng, they told his Majestie, what they had heard me say concerning Aubury, sc. that it did as much excell of Stoneheng as a Cathedral does a Parish Church. His Majestie admired that none of our Chorographers had taken notice of it: and commanded Dr Charleton to bring me to him the next morning. I brought with me a draught of it donne by Memorie only: but well enough resembling it, with which his Majestie was pleased: gave me his hand to kisse, and commanded me to waite on him at Marleborough . . . and the next day, his Majestie left the Queen and diverted to Aubury, where I shewed him that stupendious Antiquity. . . . As his Majestie departed from Aubury to overtake the Queen he cast his eie on Silbury-hill, about a mile off: which he had the curiosity to see.

This episode illustrates the importance of personal discovery and insight in our collective perception of landscape. The villagers who had lived for centuries at Avebury were all too familiar with the earthworks and large circle-stones obstructing their fields and cottage gardens, but Aubrey in a very real sense *discovered* the site by seeing the remains, not as an impediment, but as components of a prehistoric monument that had once been of great importance to the people of the area. Aubrey also implicitly communicated the idea that if a monument was once of great importance, albeit within a culture very different in its precepts from our own, then we should treat it with respect as well as curiosity (Figure 1).

The large henge at Avebury is now internationally recognized as one of the great monuments of the later part of the British neolithic, or new stone age. All over Britain, we can find traces of this ancient proto-civilization. Some of the remains are standing monuments in good condition, easy enough for the non-specialist to identify: some even have cast metal notices erected by bodies such

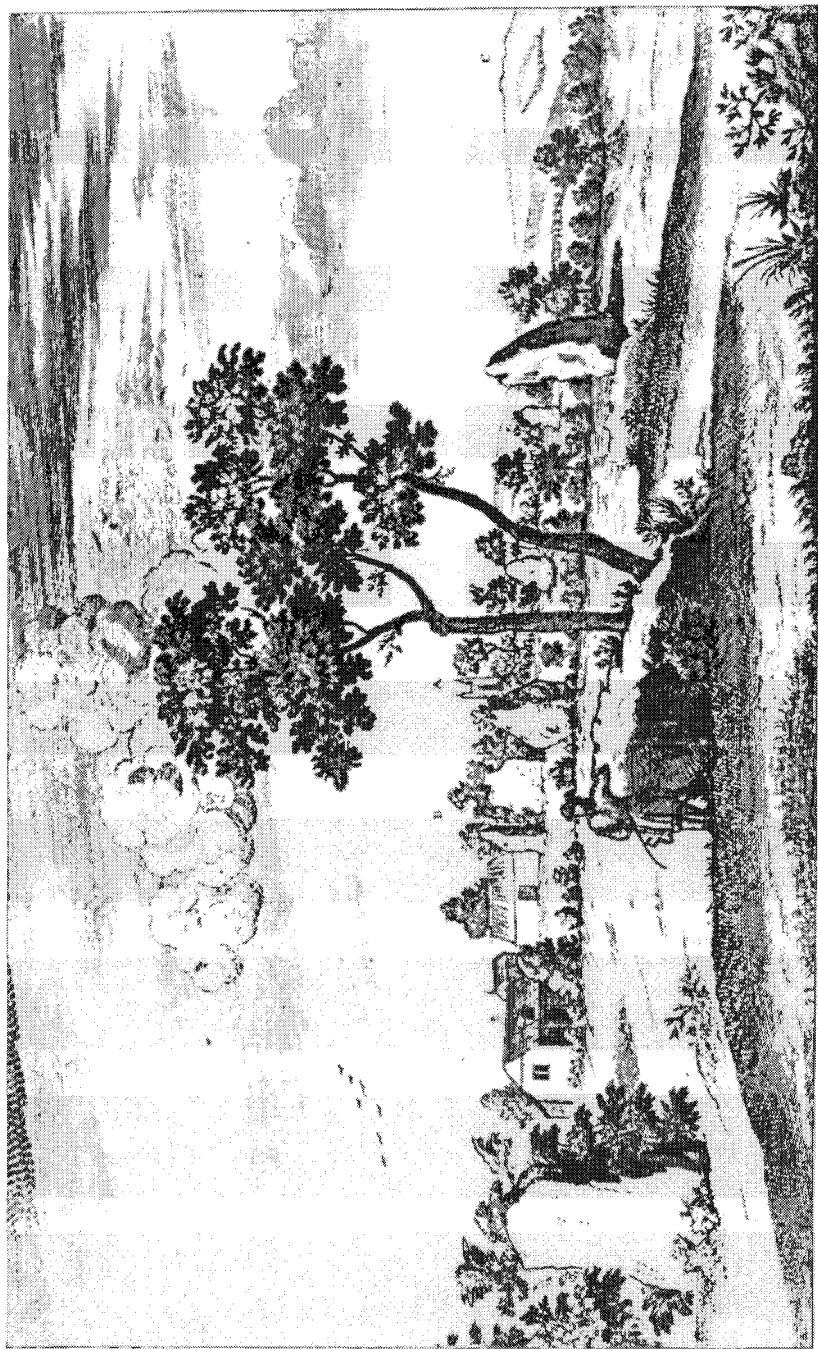


Figure 1 The North Circle and Cove at Avebury, drawn by Stukeley. Several of the stones in this picture – the ones to the right of the Cove and, coincidentally, the ones that Stukeley is looking at – have gone since he drew them in August 1722. A – Avebury parish church, B – The Cove, C – Windmill Hill.

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as the National Trust or English Heritage telling us what they were and when they were built. But many are unmarked and lie neglected and anonymous in field corners or on hilltops. It is still possible even for well-informed travellers to stumble upon remains from Britain's ancient past that they will never have heard of. One purpose of this book is to assist and amplify that experience of personal discovery, by locating the sites, suggesting what their original function might have been, and indicating where other, related sites may be found. It is too easy to see neolithic monuments as isolated and freakish.

Substantial areas of the new stone age landscape are still, surprisingly, retrievable, even though the surviving sites may seem like a multitude of archaic islands scattered across a rising sea of later developments, drowning in progress. Most of the remains from this remote period have been weathered, modified and fragmented out of recognition; many that survive have been covered by soil and vegetation and subsumed within the texture of the modern landscape, so that they are very hard to detect. The far-off world of the henges, megaliths and long barrows is so reticent that it seems useful to provide a guide for the general reader.

Within the limitations of a single volume, this book aims to serve as a comprehensive guide or vade-mecum for anyone with an interest in Britain's ancient heritage. My earlier book, *The Stonehenge People* (Castleden 1987), seeks to give an overall synthesis of the cultural achievement of the period. This book has been written to complement it by showing the sort of site detail, from more than a thousand different places, that supplied the evidence for the synthesis. It also includes details of some newly discovered sites. I hope that this approach will make clear to the general reader the scale and variety of the neolithic achievement in Britain.

There are several existing books about prehistoric sites, all of them good in their different ways, but because they extend themselves across the entire prehistoric period they are necessarily short-winded when it comes to the new stone age, and they cover relatively few neolithic sites. It seemed desirable, natural and timely to focus this guide on sites belonging to one period and one culture: it seemed the best way to ensure adequate coverage and coherence. It also seemed desirable to make the book as comprehensive as the format will allow, on the assumption that the more sites that are covered, the more useful the reader will find it.

Of the 1,100 sites included, perhaps a handful are world-famous monuments, many more will be well known among archaeologists and others with an interest in prehistory, and some will seem very obscure. A wide variety of sites of many different types has been included, partly as a reminder that our knowledge of the neolithic period does not come entirely, as some general readers may have assumed, from a few spectacular ceremonial monuments. There is far more to the British neolithic than Stonehenge and Maes Howe, inexhaustibly fascinating as those monuments are; enormous quantities of valuable information about neolithic diet, technology and social structures have been collected from some very

humble, superficially unexciting domestic sites. Archaeologists and professional prehistorians know this already, but this book has been compiled every bit as much for the use of the general reader who may be curious about a cromlech seen on holiday in Wales, or wish to widen his or her understanding of the evolution of the rural landscape of Britain, or feel a need to fill in some of that long, yawning gap in our heritage – the long millennia before documented history began.

One major problem in compiling any book about this remote period is that of dating, or the lack of it, and the difficulties that exist in defining the beginning and end of the neolithic. I have taken the British neolithic to span the period 4700 BC to 2000 BC, beginning, in other words, with the first signs of experimentation with agriculture and ending with the building of the last stone circles to use very large stones and the introduction of bronze tools on a large scale.

The preceding period, the mesolithic or middle stone age, came to an end around 4700 BC, as agriculture was adopted. There were, nevertheless, many communities where mesolithic lifestyles, depending primarily upon hunting, fishing and gathering, continued long into the neolithic period. On rocky Scottish islands, for example, where farming was difficult to introduce and unlikely to sustain a reliable food supply, the mesolithic way of life went on, probably right through the period that we are calling the neolithic. Even in southern England, where the adoption of agriculture was fairly rapid and successful, people who settled close to a river estuary, with all the varied micro-habitats it offered, opted for a mixed economy, farming but also drawing heavily on the old mesolithic practices. So the British neolithic does not have a sharply defined beginning. The period from 4700 to 4300 BC was a pioneering phase, leading to the early neolithic, 4300–3600 BC.

The middle neolithic period that followed, 3600–3200 BC, was a period which some prehistorians, such as Colin Burgess (1980) and Paul Ashbee (1978), treat as a major economic and social crisis; the true nature of that crisis is discussed in *The Stonehenge People* (1987). After it came a period of recovery, evolution and social stratification. It was during this late neolithic period, from 3200 BC until 2000 BC, that most of the great monuments of the new stone age, such as the henges and stone circles, were built. It was also during the second half of this very important culmination phase that the large earthen enclosures, or superhenges, were raised and the first high-status burials, presumably of chiefs, appeared. Clearly, by 2600 BC, things were on the change.

Defining the close of the neolithic is very difficult. The problem is that the end of the neolithic and the beginning of the bronze age does not appear to have been a sudden event: changes were under way, with the appearance of very small quantities of what are called 'Beaker' artefacts, from about 2600 BC onwards. Nevertheless, I was very struck by Colin Renfrew's perceptive observation in a television documentary about Stonehenge ('Who built Stonehenge?' 1986), to the effect that the people of the new stone age liked to 'say it with stone', which seems to express very well one of the leitmotifs of the culture. While Britain

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remained in a stone-dominated culture, with the great majority of tools still being made of stone, and the stone monuments still being constructed out of ambitiously large stones, the new stone age lived on. At the same time, we must remember that neolithic people were saying it with earth and timber as well, and that many of their ceremonial enclosures used these materials instead of stone.

Yet even identifying what we might call 'lithocentricity' as the hallmark of the neolithic leaves us with problems, because the period when stone circles were built straddles our end-date of 2000 BC. Some stone circles have been radiocarbon dated to the neolithic, i.e. between 3000 BC and 2000 BC, others to the bronze age, i.e. between 2000 and 1500 BC, but the great majority remain undated by the radiocarbon or any other absolute dating method. There is therefore an area of uncertainty about which to include and which not. At one stage I considered leaving out all the stone circles, which would have meant leaving out some that I knew to be neolithic, but I also knew that including all the stone circles would involve some that I knew were bronze age. It seemed essential to find the boundary between the generally larger monuments of the neolithic, which usually utilized larger stones, and the generally smaller bronze age circles, which usually were made of smaller stones. I sought Aubrey Burl's advice on this 'Catch 23', and I am very grateful to him for his thoughts on the subject. The solution, an attempt to identify those stone circles that are likely to have been built before 2000 BC, has not been an easy one. The earlier recumbent stone circles of old Aberdeenshire, for example, are likely to belong to the late neolithic, and are therefore included, whereas the apparently degenerate type of stone-setting known as the four-poster, which is agreed to be late, i.e. bronze age, has been left out.

I have resolved the problem as best I can using the few available radiocarbon dates and the morphological evidence of the circles' architecture, but only absolute dating for a great many more stone circles will give us a final resolution. The situation is nevertheless improving all the time. Each new radiocarbon date adds a little more detail to the overall picture, and the recalibration of 'raw' radiocarbon dates gives that picture a sharper focus. In the next, I have followed the usual convention in presenting raw, uncalibrated or uncorrected radiocarbon dates in years bc, and the recalibrated or corrected dates in calendar years BC. The uncorrected date is usually quoted first, followed by the equivalent in calendar years BC in brackets. The conversion graph used is shown in Figure 110 and explained in the Appendix.

The guide attempts to be comprehensive, and it is to be hoped that all the sites that are of interest to the reader are included. Unfortunately it is inevitable that someone's favourite site will have been omitted; in spite of the large number of sites included, the book is still a personal selection. The book had to be kept short enough to be easily portable: a guide that can be carried without difficulty in the car or rucksack. Detailed directions for reaching the sites have been omitted for a number of reasons. They would, for instance, be very space-consuming and yet still not be definitive. I have found when using other, comparable guides that even after three or four lines of detailed directions I have had to consult a 1:50,000

Ordnance Survey map in order to work out where the monument was and the best way of approaching it; sometimes that varies significantly according to mode of transport. In nearly every case it has been possible to supply a six-figure grid reference, and this standard procedure seems easily the most economical and unambiguous way of locating the sites. In the background there was also a disquieting feeling that guiding readers along specific tracks and paths would be tantamount to encouraging them to visit, and this leads on into the very important issue of access.

The inclusion of a site in this book does not guarantee any right of access. Every monument in Britain stands on land that belongs to someone. In some cases, such as the National Trust or English Heritage, and a good proportion of private landowners, the owner is enlightened enough to care for the monument and still allow controlled public access. Nevertheless, there are some private landowners who are hostile, and they are within their rights if they refuse access to monuments standing on their land: it is as well to make sure before undertaking a long journey to see a site that your visit will be well received. It is the would-be visitor's responsibility to seek the owner's permission. However keenly you may wish to see any site, the law of trespass is clear. Trespass is

the act of entering or remaining upon land of another without his permission. If the permission originally given is later withdrawn, a trespass will be committed. A landowner can take a person trespassing to court without proving loss or damage to his land. Any actual damage he can show will entitle him to increased compensation.

It may be that the Ordnance Survey map indicates a road with a Ministry of Transport classification, or a public footpath, passing right beside or even through the monument, in which case access is assured. In other words, the book really needs to be used in conjunction with an Ordnance Survey map of the area in question.

One further disclaimer needs to be made. The inclusion of a site in this guide does not necessarily mean that anything interesting remains to be seen there. Some sites have been discovered accidentally, for instance during gravel extraction: after a rescue dig, the site will have been destroyed utterly. Sites have been destroyed by urban or industrial development, road widening, by-pass building, and deep ploughing. In some rare cases, monuments have even been destroyed by archaeologists. Neolithic sites have been damaged and lost at an alarming rate. We can only guess at the numbers of sites that were destroyed before the modern period, but the known losses during the last 200 years alone have been catastrophic. The traditional sheep pasture of the downlands of southern England helped to conserve a great many sites until 1940, but the government-subsidized craze for ploughing from then onwards has annihilated many a long barrow and other neolithic sites as well. It is for this reason that entries on specific sites sometimes refer to or draw upon the notes, plans and sketches made by antiquaries of the seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, as well as the scientific

INTRODUCTION

investigations of twentieth-century archaeologists. The observations of antiquaries such as John Aubrey and William Stukeley are invaluable in helping us to reconstruct the appearance of monuments that have long since been damaged beyond recognition.

My hope is that this book will contribute in a small way to raising public awareness of the very real threat that exists to our neolithic heritage. Greater awareness of the whereabouts of the sites, and their significance can only help to conserve what is left.

In 1990, English Heritage drew attention to the implications of the Department of Transport's road-building schemes as outlined in the 1989 Government White Paper 'Roads for Prosperity' and the 1990 Government Report 'Trunk Roads: England into the 1990s'. The road works, if carried out, are likely to involve nearly 300 km of roads and the use of more than 14,800 hectares of land. They would cause the destruction of at least 840 known archaeological sites of various periods; a proportion of these will be new stone age sites. The figure of 840 is bound to be an underestimate. When large areas of topsoil are stripped off in preparation for extensive road works, new and previously unsuspected sites inevitably come to light, and it may be that as many as 5,000 sites will be imperilled.

It is difficult to be other than alarmist. We like to believe that we live in educated and enlightened times, and that our media-saturated society is so well-informed and well-equipped that it cannot help but devise successful strategies for managing the environment, managing the future and managing the past. And yet ours is a society that is prepared to allow its bureaucrats to contemplate adding a second carriageway to the A303, which would destroy six prehistoric barrows, as well as an unknown number of yet-undiscovered features, very close to the key neolithic ritual centre of Stonehenge. As I write, Dr Alastair Whittle is conducting one of the most exciting archaeological excavations of the decade, uncovering the remains of two large post circles close to Silbury Hill and the West Kennet Avenue. These monuments, which are as yet imperfectly understood, were clearly an important element in the ceremonial complex centring on Avebury, a ritual landscape that, as Professor Peter Ucko (Ucko *et al.* 1991) reminds us, we are only beginning to understand. And yet, as I write, plans to build a large hotel on the post circle site are being discussed.

Officially sanctioned vandalism may be large in scale, but an enormous amount of damage has been done piecemeal, by private individuals with varying motives (Figure 2). It is important to remember that many of the sites described are protected by their status as scheduled ancient monuments, and it is illegal to excavate, bury, or damage them in any way without formal permission from the Department of the Environment. The consequences of vandalism can be serious. In 1990, the company responsible for excavating part of Legbourne Priory in Lincolnshire and burying another part of the site was fined £15,000 for the offence. Unfortunately, many of the neolithic sites are remote and damage to them often goes unnoticed for a long time. Readers can help in reducing this



Figure 2 Farmer Robinson, the ‘stone-killer’ who used fire and water to smash many of the Avebury stones. William Stukeley drew this villainous portrait as a tailpiece for his ‘Abury’ in 1743. The background includes a stone being broken over a fire pit, a bat, a presiding hag, and further megaliths awaiting destruction.

kind of damage by reporting at once to the police any activity they see causing damage to a monument.

An improved understanding of the true nature of these monuments, and what they once meant to our ancestors, will also help us to see a new dimension in the British landscape. If we can see the ruined, degraded and overgrown remnants as fragments of a new stone age scene, then we are close to seeing the landscape not through our own eyes alone, but through those of our forefathers. As William Stukeley wrote in the eighteenth century, ‘If we examine into the antiquities of nations that had no writing among them, here are their monuments. These we are to explore; and the more we reason upon them, the more reasons shall we find to admire the vast size of the minds of our predecessors.’

ENGLAND

AVON

CHEW PARK

c. ST: 5757

In the new stone age, an irregularly shaped house 3.5m by 3m supported by about six vertical posts, and with an entrance on the southern side, stood here. The remains were obscured by those of a Roman villa, but the neolithic house seems to have been roughly hexagonal or possibly D-shaped in plan.

DRUID STOKE

Bristol

ST: 561762

This possible chambered long barrow site consists of a rectangular area of displaced stones. One massive slab 3m long is still supported by a smaller stone upright. The site was excavated in 1913, but without any positive results or finds, so its status remains uncertain.

FAIRY TOOTE

Nempnett Thrubwell

c. ST: 5360

This destroyed Cotswold–Severn tomb was first opened in 1788. Although the monument was almost entirely destroyed by 1835, some of its details were recorded. The number of pairs of side chambers varies according to source – some say six, others eight – but it is a large number, whichever is correct. The chamber complex was larger than that at Stoney Littleton, about 26m long, compared with Stoney Littleton's 18m. Bones were found in the chambers in some numbers: 'in one of them 7 skulls were found, one quite perfect; in another a vast heap of small human bones and horses'. At Fairy Toote, it looks as if the human remains were disarticulated and sorted before they were buried in the tomb, suggesting a two-phase funerary ritual that seems to have prevailed throughout Britain.

STANTON DREW

ST: 601634

This group of three stone circles lying low on the Chew valley floor includes the second largest circle in Britain, and yet the monument is far from well known. The site's potential impressiveness is greatly reduced by its low-lying location, backing onto a farmyard, the low ridge separating the South-West Circle from the Great Circle, and the positioning of the parish church of St Mary's between

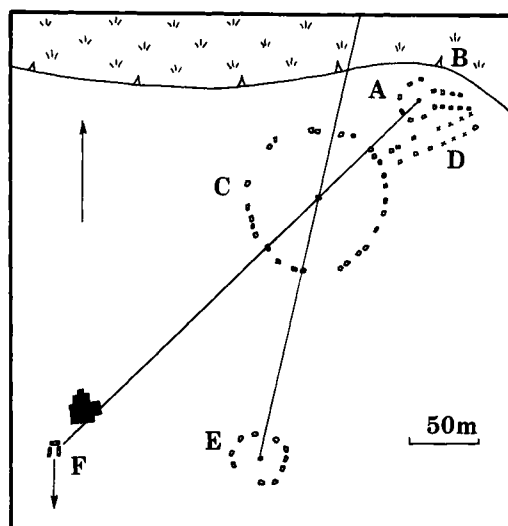


Figure 3 Stanton Drew. A – North-East Circle, B – stone avenue leading from North-East Circle to water meadows, C – Great Circle, D – stone avenue leading from Great Circle to water meadows, E – South-West Circle, F – Cove, facing south. The site's geometry has been drawn in, showing the alignment of the Cove, Great Circle and North-East Circle, and the alignment of the South-West Circle, Great Circle and Hautville's Quoit, which is off the map.

the Cove and the rest of the ritual complex. The monument as a whole is generally considered to consist of the three stone circles, the Cove, two short and badly damaged stone avenues, and an outlying stone known as Hautville's Quoit. Although at first sight the arrangement of these elements looks casual and informal, there are detectable alignments which are almost certainly part of the original design. The North-East Circle, the Great Circle and the Cove all lie on the same straight line (SW-NE). The South-West Circle, the Great Circle and Hautville's Quoit lie on a different line running SSW-NNE.

Of the 30 stones in the Great Circle, only 3 are still standing; the rest have fallen. They make a circle 113m in diameter. One or two of the stones are sarsens, the rest are the local dolomitic conglomerate. The Great Circle stands in a level meadow a little above the Chew floodplain, the edge of which lies only 40m away to the north; a short avenue of stones leads away to the north-east, as if to connect the Great Circle to the watermeadows. Near the north-east end of the avenue is

the North-East Circle, a much smaller monument 30m across and consisting of only eight stones, four of which are still upright. The North-East Circle has its own avenue, also of eight stones, which leads eastwards and seems to get tangled up with the terminus of the Great Circle avenue. Their orientation towards the wet floodplain of the River Chew suggests that water may have played some part in the religious beliefs of the monument builders.

The South-West Circle, on the southern slope of a low ridge that separates it from the Great Circle, is a little larger than the North-East Circle, 40–43m across. It consisted of 11 or 12 stones, all of which have now fallen. Due west of the South-West Circle is the Cove, a box-like setting of three very large stones arranged along three sides of a square. The fourth side, to the south, is open, suggesting an orientation to the sun's zenith. The back or central stone has unfortunately fallen. The building of the parish church right next to the Cove is reminiscent of the juxtaposition of church and monolith at Rudston. Hautville's Quoit, now also fallen, lies some 360m NNE of the Great Circle; as an outlier, it may have served as an astronomical marker of some kind, but this has not been proved.

Rather surprisingly, Stanton Drew has been neglected by archaeologists. It has never been excavated, but it seems likely to belong to the late neolithic, possibly around 2600 BC (Figure 3).

STONEY LITTLETON

ST: 735572

This very fine chambered long barrow of Cotswold–Severn type was carefully and beautifully restored in 1858. The grass-covered mound is 30m long and 15m

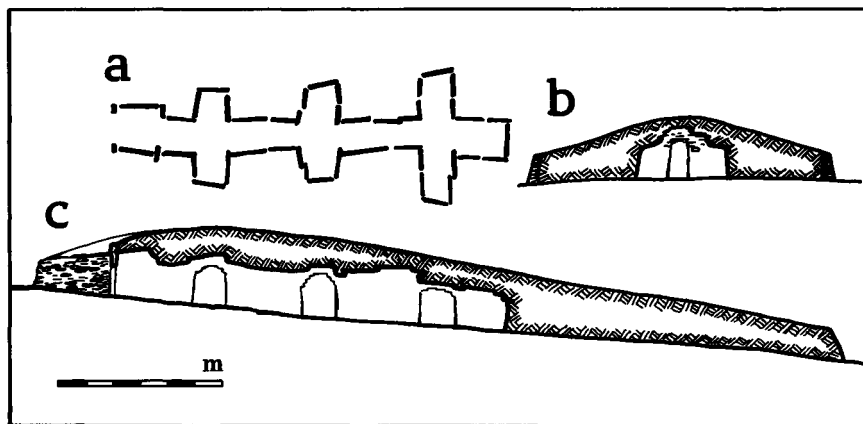


Figure 4 Stoney Littleton, a Cotswold–Severn chambered long cairn. a – plan of the transepted chambers, b – cross section, c – long profile.

wide, contained within a well-made drystone retaining wall, which gives it the appearance of a turf-roofed house. At the south-east end there is a horned entrance with a fossil ammonite cast on the western door jamb; whether the positioning of the decorative fossil at the tomb entrance was inadvertent is open to speculation, but the form is reminiscent of the neolithic spiral carvings deliberately placed at tomb entrances at Newgrange and Pierowall, so it may well have been selected for its symbolic value. The entrance leads into a low-ceilinged gallery with three pairs of side chambers and an end chamber. The gallery is 15m long but only a metre or so high: crawling is easier than walking here. In 1816, the Revd John Skinner broke in through the roof to explore the tomb chambers. He found many human bones and fragments of pottery (Figure 4).

BEDFORDSHIRE

BARTON HILL FARM

Streatley

TL: 094282

This middle neolithic henge barrow was discovered from air photographs in 1948. The foundation trench of a wooden mortuary enclosure and two crouched burials were enclosed inside a circular ditch 30m in diameter. The ditch and external bank were broken by an entrance causeway, and from this a row of posts led to a site consisting of a number of overlapping pits.

**BISCOT MILL LONG
BARROW**

Luton

TL: 079232

The exact location of this destroyed long barrow is not known for certain, although it seems likely that it was the mound on which Biscot Windmill was built. This stood behind what is now the Biscot Mill public house. Two polished greenstone axes have been found here, which suggests that it was a neolithic site of some kind.

CARDINGTON CAUSEWAYED ENCLOSURE

TL: 093484

A causewayed enclosure site in a field called Stonyland Furlong. The misshapen circular precinct is enclosed by three closely spaced interrupted ditches. The small straight-sided enclosures which lie within it, and also across the ditches and outside, probably relate to a later prehistoric occupation of the site. Close by, at TL: 092502, cropmarks indicate the existence of mortuary enclosures, an oval barrow and a cursus.

DUNSTABLE DOWN LONG BARROW

TL: 012222

An earthen long barrow 30m long, forming part of the Five Knolls Barrow Cemetery on Dunstable Down.

FURZENHILL FARM CURSUS

TL: 196466

A possible cursus showing as a cropmark.

**GALLEY HILL LONG
BARROW**

Streatley

TL: 086268

This long barrow, destroyed in about 1900, lay to the west of Galley Hill. Air photographs show it to have been 90m long; this seems incredibly long for a Chiltern long barrow, but it may be that it was spread during destruction and was originally significantly shorter. Excavation produced Windmill Hill pottery and human bones.

GOLDINGTON HENGES

TL: 078504

The earliest monument at this complex ritual site was a henge with a single entrance to the south-west. Its ditch, 2.5m wide and 2m deep, encircled a precinct 25m in diameter. The ditch was open for a time and full of water, forming a kind of moat, before it was deliberately filled in using material from its inner bank. There was apparently no external bank. The ditch was subsequently recut and once again backfilled, perhaps as part of some recurring ritual act. The refill contained pottery, flints and hazel nuts. Within the henge, and probably contemporary with the first cutting of the ditch, were seven pairs of post-pits, 0.6m deep and 0.6m in diameter, regularly spaced round the circumference. A single cremation was found near the centre. The henge was re-used for burial in the bronze age; there is a cremation pit of the later period dug through the windblown sands that seal in the neolithic levels.

A second site nearby (at TL: 078502) also seems to have begun as a single-entrance henge. Its irregular, sub-circular ditch 2.5m wide and 0.8m deep enclosed an area 34–40m in diameter. There was a single, narrow entrance on the north side. There were several small pits on the enclosure circumference; three contained cremated bone, while the others contained deposits of hazel nuts, potsherds and a broken flint axe. Two pits dug in the centre of the henge each contained the body of a child, one of them accompanied by a small pot, some flints and a stone ball. A post-pit near the child burials probably carried a marker or totem pole, and the burial area was defined by a circle of stake-holes. This encircling fence was quickly replaced by a low turf mound 0.4m high and 14m in diameter; the mound was later enlarged, and further burials followed. Whether the central child burials represent evidence of child sacrifice as a foundation offering for the

BEDFORDSHIRE

monument is open to speculation, but parallels with Woodhenge and other sites inevitably spring to mind. The burial monument was re-used, still for burial, in the ensuing bronze age, and seems to have retained its original neolithic function until about 1200 BC.

HOUGHTON CONQUEST LONG BARROW TL: 055405

Unusually located on sand hills, this long barrow runs from north-west to south-east up a hill slope. It is 50m long, 10m wide and 1.5m high, with traces of side ditches. About 90m away to the east there is a round barrow 18m in diameter.

KNOCKING KNOLL LONG BARROW Pegsdon TL: 133311

This large long barrow straddles the county boundary; its Hertfordshire half has been destroyed by the plough, giving it the appearance of a large round barrow 30m in diameter. A chalk cist incorporating a crouched burial was set in the east end. The barrow was opened by William Ransom in about 1855, and William Stukeley mentioned it over a hundred years earlier, but the only other record of it seems to be a watercolour in Hitchin Museum.

LEAGRAVE LONG BARROW TL: 057247

An earthen long barrow 30m long.

MAIDEN BOWER Houghton Regis SP: 997224

Beneath the small iron age plateau fort lie the remains of a neolithic causewayed enclosure. In the nineteenth century, several sections of flat-bottomed ditch were found, and some of these can still be seen in the side of the quarry that is eroding away both fort and neolithic enclosure on the north side. The ditches have yielded bones, Windmill Hill pottery and an antler comb. Bones found in the neolithic ditch in 1898 had been split 'for the extraction of marrow', or so it was believed. The iron age ditches, with their distinctive V-shape, are also plainly visible.

MAULDEN HENGE Barton-in-the-Clay TL: 095275

A large henge monument 150m in diameter, discovered by James Dyer in 1962. It shows up on air photographs, where it appears to have an entrance on the south side. A line of pits, possibly representing a post row, leads from the henge southwards for about 1km. A section through the pits produced fragments of neolithic pottery.

MILL HILL LONG BARROW Dunstable

TL: 012222

This long barrow once stood in Union Street, Dunstable. It was mentioned by William Stukeley in 1724, but unfortunately it was never excavated. It seems to have been about 30m long and oriented W–E. It was destroyed in the twentieth century.

WAULUD'S BANK

Luton

TL: 061246

A D-shaped enclosure at the source of the River Lea. It is probably late neolithic, replacing the earlier and higher enclosure of Maiden Bower. The semi-circular bank defining this monument is now difficult to trace, although it is still 2.5m high in places. There is a silted-up outer ditch 6m wide. Ditch and bank sweep up in an arc from the source of the Lea, past blocks of flats, and round the crest of the hill to Youth House. Excavation has proved that the site is neolithic, and it exhibits some significant points of similarity with henge monuments. A comparison with the great henge at Marden suggests itself; like Marden, Waulud's Bank uses a stream as part of its perimeter, apparently for ritual rather than defensive reasons. No entrances or internal features have as yet been found at Waulud's Bank, although Grooved ware pottery and many arrow-heads have; the arrows may be interpreted as evidence of warfare or of hunting in marshes and woodland. A long barrow site was been tentatively identified nearby, at TL: 057247 (Figure 5).

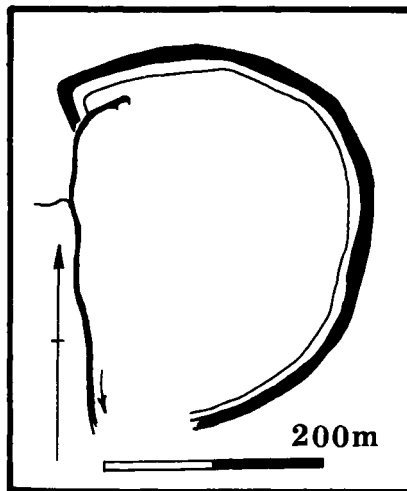


Figure 5 Waulud's Bank, a large D-shaped enclosure at the source of the River Lea, which is in the north-west corner of the enclosure. The thick black line shows the enclosure ditch.

BERKSHIRE

BEENHAM RING DITCH **Marley Tile Pit** SU: 604678

A chance find of a Great Langdale greenstone axe in the scoop of a mechanical grab led to the discovery of a ring ditch 55m in diameter. The axe probably came from the ditch fill. Other remains included fragments of pottery, including one piece that might have belonged to a Grooved ware vessel. The ring ditch has been quarried away.

CANNONS HILL SU: 896792

One of the few earlier neolithic pottery assemblages of the region has been found here. The pottery was undecorated ware, including carinated, round-based bowls tempered with crushed flints.

ENGLEFIELD RING DITCHES SU: 624702

These four conjoining ring ditches were discovered from the air in 1962; one of them was excavated by Paul Ashbee and J. J. Wymer in 1963. The excavated ring ditch was the easternmost and smallest of the four, about 15m in diameter. The other three were about twice this size. Their centres lay in an approximately straight line. Pottery fragments from the ditch represented remains of Windmill Hill, Grooved ware, Mortlake and Fengate styles. There were also flint flakes, two transverse arrow-heads and some scrapers.

LAMBOURN LONG BARROW SU: 323834

At the southern end of the Westcot Wood lies this ruined long barrow. It is about 80m long and 20m wide, and still 1m high at its eastern end. Martin Atkins dug into it in the nineteenth century and found skeletons, but left no details. More recently, John Wymer found a crouched female skeleton, with an unusual necklace of whelk shells, in a sarsen stone cist at the barrow's eastern end. This did not form part of the primary deposit, but had been tucked into the core of sarsen stones some time after the barrow had been built. Charcoal from the barrow gave a radiocarbon date of 3415 bc (4250 BC).

This is the only long barrow in Berkshire to have been scientifically investigated, and it turns out to be very early. The use of turves in the construction speaks of an open, pastoral environment even at this early date, as at Wayland's Smithy. The chalk country of Berkshire has rather surprisingly yielded no major ceremonial enclosures – at least none have been discovered so far. The fact that the area lies on or close to the edge of the long barrow distribution (in the main confined to the chalk outcrops) may have meant that unusual conditions prevailed there.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

SONNING

SU: 75 75

A sub-rectangular ritual enclosure 40m by 30m, surrounded by a ditch 2–3m wide. There was an apparently random scatter of eight storage or votive pits within the enclosure. No domestic debris was found at the site, which suggests strongly that it may have had a sacred or funerary use.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

PITSTONE HILL

SP: 949142

Two flint mines have been identified here, at the north-western end of the chalk escarpment. The surface hollows are still about 3m deep. Although such sites are common enough in the South Downs, they are surprisingly rare in the Chilterns, although some more have been identified in Whipsnade Zoo, not far away. Immediately to the east of the Pitstone Hill flint mines there are traces of a discontinuous (i.e. causewayed) ditch, which may well turn out to be the remains of a neolithic causewayed enclosure.

WHITELEAF BARROW

Princes Risborough

SP: 822040

False-crested and located just above the medieval Whiteleaf Cross are the damaged and overgrown remains of Whiteleaf Barrow. It was excavated in the 1930s. The barrow was kidney-shaped and 20m across, surrounded by a circular ditch 24m in diameter, with a concave 'forecourt' area on the eastern side. Its shape is unusual for a southern tomb. Under the mound was a wooden burial chamber or mortuary house 2.4m long and 1.7m wide. The left foot of a middle-aged man was found in the chamber, but the rest of his bones were scattered across the forecourt. Fragments of over 50 neolithic pots and hundreds of pieces of worked flint were found throughout the barrow mound; presumably this neolithic occupation debris was lying about on the ground when the mound material was scraped up. The pottery fragments found in the barrow carry impressions of two types of wheat grain, *Triticum dicoccum* and *Triticum compactum*. The grain must have been lying about on the surface on which the pottery was made: the neolithic British were not particularly clean or tidy. The Whiteleaf Barrow has the distinction of being the only known neolithic mound burial in Buckinghamshire.

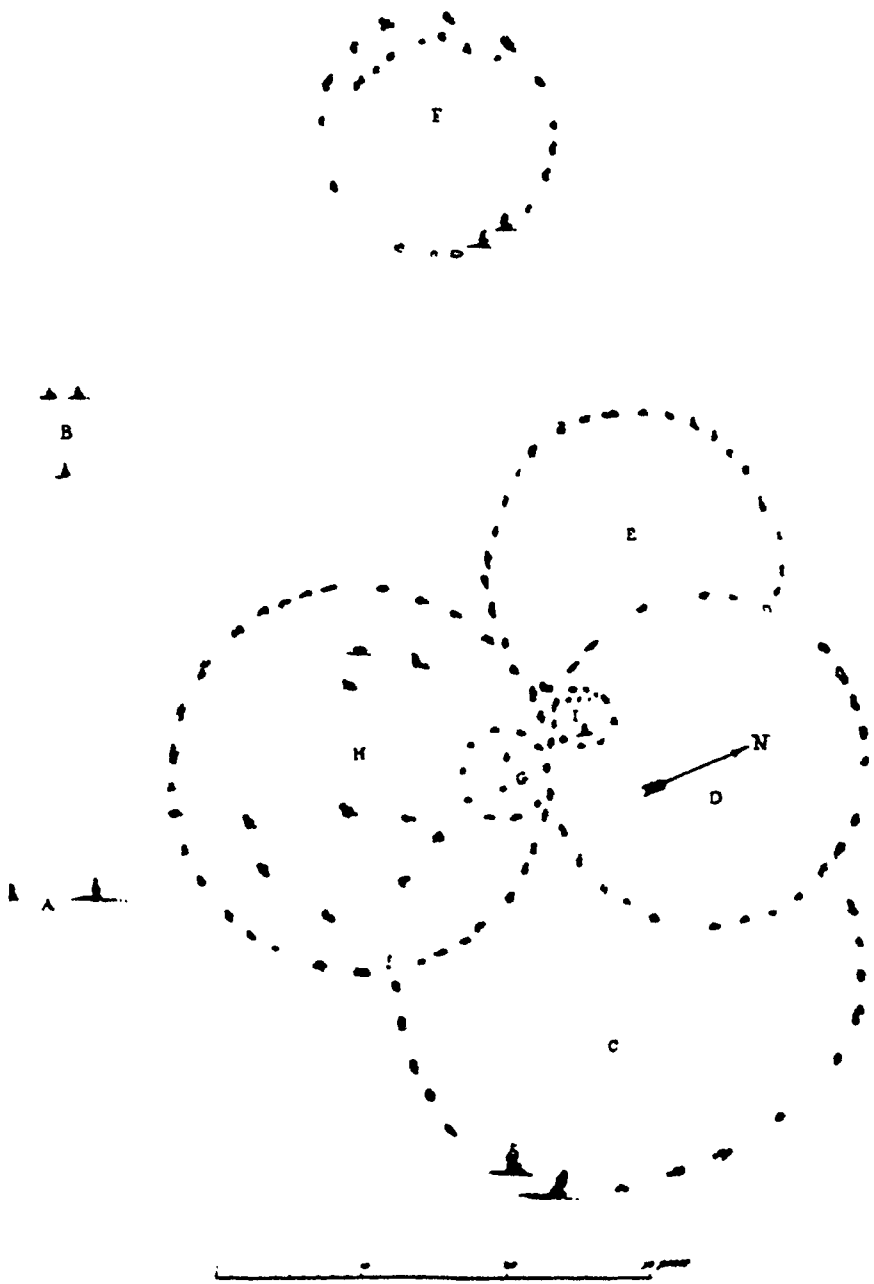


Figure 6 A lost stone circle complex at St Just, Cornwall. The stones were removed for building. The overlapping design is very unusual and one might suspect that it had been misinterpreted, but Dr William Borlase, who recorded it in 1754, was a careful and accurate observer. The largest of these circles had a diameter of more than 30 paces.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

BARNACK CURSUS

TF: 082065

A cursus monument.

BUCKDEN GRAVEL PIT

TL: 202680

An occupation site on gravels of the River Cam's third terrace. Several pits were found, one containing a neolithic pot.

BUCKWORTH LONG BARROW

TL: 139768

A long barrow 100m long and 15m wide; it was ploughed down in 1945.

BURWELL

TL: 570675

A neolithic and early bronze age settlement about 3m above sea level in Hallard's Fen. Large numbers of flint implements have been found in the fenland of Burwell parish, and the concentration of flints in Hallard's Fen shows that there was a settlement site here. Finds include quantities of flint cores and a number of polished axes, leaf-shaped arrow-heads, scrapers and burins. There were also late neolithic ring ditches in the area, at TL: 601688, 596656, 596565, 587653, 593646 and 583646, but they have all been ploughed out.

CAMBRIDGE

TL: 475547

An occupation site. A pit containing late neolithic Grooved ware pottery was revealed when an anti-tank ditch was cut in the 1940s.

CHERRY HINTON

TL: 4857

An occupation site. Excavation revealed a pit containing three sherds of neolithic Grooved ware, flint flakes, a scraper and a core.

ELTON HENGE

TL: 082962

A henge about 100m in diameter was inferred from cropmarks visible from the air in 1960 and 1977. The entrance is slightly west of south and the ditch itself seems to be very broad. Other cropmarks nearby may not be contemporary with the henge. One ring ditch, to the north-west, straddles the henge ditch, indicating that the henge was already disused when the ring ditch was dug. Air photographs show a large sub-rectangular enclosure with internal divisions inside the henge, and circular, linear and rectangular features both inside and outside the circle. The henge ditch is 5.5m wide but only 1m deep, with steep sides and a floor that is nearly flat. A few small plain black sherds were found and a number of flint

flakes. Thick lenses of burnt soil containing charcoal near the ditch bottom have given a radiocarbon date of 4070 bp (2600 BC). Just inside and parallel to the ditch was a narrow trench, which was evidently a bedding trench for a palisade. The site is likely to be destroyed by mineral extraction; at the time of writing, planning consent had already been given.

ELTON

TL: 085927

An early neolithic D-shaped enclosure, measuring 12m by 12m, with an entrance to the west. It was later remodelled with a new entrance to the east. Its ditches contained artefacts that show beyond much doubt that the enclosure was domestic. Probably contemporary with the D-shaped house-enclosure was an open pit grave, which contained the disarticulated remains of at least five people. Also contemporary was a straight-sided cairn made – unusually for lowland England – of river gravel pebbles. It had a semi-circular entrance façade made of ten posts at its southern end. The whole complex was replaced in the late neolithic by a rectilinear field system aligned at right angles to the stream channel. The late neolithic fields, nestling in the floor of the Nene valley, were in their turn buried beneath slopewash in the ensuing bronze age. Now, the site has been designated as part of the route of the A605 Elton–Chesterton bypass.

ETTON CAUSEWAYED ENCLOSURE**Maxey**

TF: 138073

A settlement and ceremonial site at the eastern end of the Maxey ritual complex. The causewayed enclosure consists of a single segmented ditch enclosing an oval area 180m (W–E) by 140m (N–S); the southern end of the Maxey Cursus runs close to it. The site was probably occupied for a hundred years around 2700 BC, although radiocarbon dates have yet to confirm this, and probably mainly in the summer months. Even so, the lower parts of the ditch must always have been wet; when digging it out, the neolithic workers must often have been standing up to their knees in water. The ditch was cleaned out several times. A low-lying turf-fronted platform was built and fires were lit on top of it.

The waterlogged layers in the enclosure ditch preserved the remains of twigs, leaves, seeds, wood chips and pointed sticks. An axe handle, probably made of ash, was apparently split during use across the axe-head socket; this must have been a common enough problem for neolithic wood-cutters. Also from the lower ditch came many large sherds of middle neolithic Mildenhall pottery, some with remnants of food still sticking to them. The pottery was all very similar, showing a narrow range of shapes and decorative motifs. The ditch yielded fragments of antler and 4,000 pieces of wood. There was evidence of coppicing: rather surprisingly, coppice stools were allowed to grow in the bottom of the ditch. It may be that the Etton people made something coarser in texture than basketwork, perhaps producing objects akin to the Sussex trug.

Cattle were reared and the bones even of relatively young cows show evidence of arthritis; the slopes here are very gentle, so they may have been used for drawing ards, sleds or carts. There were symbolic or dedicatory deposits near the ditch terminals, such as a small heap of butchered animal bones, a complete pot on a birch bark mat, a neat bundle of calf ribs beside a pile of hazel nuts, a length of vegetable fibre twine and a piece of squared-off birch bark. These were carefully placed deposits, and not merely tips of rubbish. The enclosure had two clearly differentiated halves, one funerary, the other non-funerary, and they were separated by a line of post-holes. The enormous quantity of detail from this site gives us an unusual insight into people's everyday lives, not least the curious dovetailing of secular and ritual elements.

ETTON WOODGATE**Maxey**

TF: 138073

A settlement on what is now cultivated land, 80m WNW of the causewayed enclosure. A length of ditch followed the curve of a low, buried scarp, and was broken by a broad entrance, which was located opposite one of the entrances of the causewayed enclosure. Just inside the settlement entrance there were small pits, one of them containing a crouched burial, and post-holes containing blade-like flints of early neolithic form, as well as fired clay, burnt stone and some plain pottery. The settlement seems to have spread out across a hectare of land, on both sides of the ditch. Patterns of post-holes suggest that people were living in straight-sided wooden houses.

FENGATE SETTLEMENT AND FIELD SYSTEM

TL: 213989

The first forest clearings here were made and occupied by 3500 BC. Among the remains at Fengate are those of an early neolithic house to the west of Cat's Water; its four foundation trenches formed a rectangle 7m by 8.5m, and there were also a few associated pits and post-holes. The house dates from around 3500 BC. Pottery found in the trenches belongs to the Grimston/Lyles Hill tradition, which spanned a period of 1,000 years and so is not in any way definitive in dating the house. Pieces of 'burnt clay' may be the remains of wattle-and-daub walls, although no impressions of wattles survive. Four people, perhaps the occupants of this house, were buried in a pit beside it. One of them had an arrow-head between his ribs, implying a violent death.

A later building was raised inside a ring ditch and therefore may have been a shrine; this has been radiocarbon dated to 1860 or 1930 BC (2300–2400 BC). Four phases of activity can be detected at this site. In Phase 1, dated to 2030–2010 BC (2550–2500 BC), a straight-sided enclosure and a driveway for livestock were in use. In Phase 2, around 1860 BC (2300 BC), the drainage ditches were deepened and the ring ditch was made. After the abandonment of the ring ditch, at the beginning of Phase 3, 1460–1360 BC (1800–1700 BC), the field system continued in use, largely unchanged, but the people appear to have moved elsewhere; there

is no sign of permanent settlement among these fields. The ring ditch was left to silt up, although it was still visible in the early bronze age, when it was cleaned out to supply material for a burial mound. In Phase 4, the field system still continued in use, though it is assumed that it finally went out of use when the well was abandoned in about 1050 bc (1300 BC). The Fengate field system shows us in unique detail a pattern of gradually changing land use and occupation right through the middle and late neolithic, and on into the bronze age; the site is nevertheless a very difficult one to interpret.

FOULMIRE FEN

TL: 420766

A middle and late neolithic settlement on the southern edge of the sand and gravel island in Foulmire, 100m to the south of the Haddenham Long Barrow. Finds here include large quantities of flintwork, including leaf-shaped and barbed-and-tanged arrow-heads, Fengate pottery, and a large spread of bark evidently cut by human hand. Possibly this was a centre for salt production: the sea is known to have encroached in the Fens in the late third millennium BC, and the site was eventually sealed in by the resulting deposits of Fen Clay.

GODMANCHESTER ENCLOSURE

TL: 255709

A large trapeze-shaped enclosure (7ha) on level terrace gravels at Rectory Farm, Godmanchester, which has been excavated in advance of gravel working. A ditch 4m wide and 1m deep ran round three sides of an almost rectangular enclosure 336m long, 180m wide at the narrower south-west end and 230m wide at the open north-east end. At the north-east end the ditch terminals turned inwards but left a broad entrance gap 176m wide. The upcast from the ditch formed an internal bank. Within that were 24 large post-holes, evidently sockets for substantial totem poles, arranged round the perimeter of the enclosure. The biggest posts stood at each end of the enclosure, on its axis. The spacing of the posts along the sides was fairly regular, mostly 36–38m, but not exactly uniform, which suggests that pacing was probably used to lay out the design. The more significant posts at the ends were unevenly spaced, which implies that they were laid out according to some other criterion.

A radiocarbon date of 2270 bc (2950 BC) from an antler at the bottom of one of the post-holes tells us when this remarkable, and undoubtedly important, monument was built.

The Godmanchester Enclosure has no known counterpart anywhere in the British Isles or Brittany, which makes its loss to gravel extraction all the sadder. Aubrey Burl and Jon Humble have established alignments among the post-holes to *all* the major risings and settings of the sun and moon. For example, a line from the axial post at the south-west end, post 13, to the northern gatepost, post 2, marked the midsummer sunrise; a diagonal line from the north-west corner, post 11, to the southern gatepost, post 24, marked the equinox sunrise and sunset.

It could be argued that 24 posts will offer a very large number of possible sightlines and that some of these are bound to hit significant astronomical events by chance. Nevertheless, the posts that define solar and lunar alignments in 2900 BC – and *only* those posts – were treated in a special way with ritual deposits of antlers, ox skulls or ox jawbones.

Though the shape and design of the Godmanchester Enclosure are different from those of Stonehenge I, the astronomical and ritual preoccupations seem to have been very similar. It was also, significantly, built only a century or so after Stonehenge I, at a time when the same ideas were in the air.

GREAT WILBRAHAM

TL: 539578

A causewayed enclosure site on low-lying ground at 15m OD, close to a stream. The site is a knoll or low spur made of gravels of the Cam's second terrace. It was, in other words, always above flood level. Surface finds of struck flakes, some with secondary working, appear to belong to the earlier neolithic. The land has only recently come under the plough, yet nothing is visible at ground level. The site was excavated in 1975–6. The two concentric ditches yielded a lot of pottery, as well as animal and plant remains. Excavations in the mere which surrounds the gravel knoll on three sides have turned up a great deal of organic material, pottery and flint, some of it contemporary with the causewayed enclosure.

HADDENHAM CAUSEWAYED ENCLOSURE

TL: 412736

A neolithic causewayed enclosure at the edge of the Fens. It has two encircling ditches; the inner one, 1.5–2.0m deep, is middle neolithic, the outer one, 0.8m deep, is late neolithic. Waterlogging at the bottom of the ditch allowed the preservation of some oak planks and other cultural material that does not normally survive in the archaeological record. It was excavated in 1981. Set back about 10m inside the ditch was a palisade trench for substantial posts, implying that the entrances must have been formal. There was also a placed deposit or offering of a polished axe and fragments of three or more human skulls in the primary fill of the ditch. The site was modified in the middle iron age, apparently for funerary purposes, indicating the continuity of the site's sanctity.

HADDENHAM LONG BARROW

TL: 420767

15km north of Cambridge, where the Great Ouse enters the Fens, the Haddenham Long Barrow forms the focal point for a major barrow cemetery. The barrow mound is 49m long and 18m wide, and was excavated by Ian Hodder in the 1980s. Under its broader north-eastern end, there was a rectangular wooden mortuary chamber: the 7m-long, box-like chamber was made of massive oak planks up to 25cm thick, 1.3m wide and 4m long. Axial posts at the ends may have supported the roof. There seems to have been an oaken floor too. Immediately in

front of the mortuary chamber was a straight 12m-long façade, with limbs returning towards the west for 3 or 4m at each end. The façade was probably originally a free-standing structure, like the one at Giant's Hills, and probably made of oak trunks 60cm in diameter. There were 60–80cm gaps at the corners, implying entrances of some kind. Finally, a trapezoid barrow was raised over the façade and mortuary chamber, making a mound 50m long and 1.2m high. But first the wooden chamber was dismantled and set on fire; burnt and smashed pottery in front of the tomb shows that this was part of a funerary ritual, which has parallels at other tomb sites, such as Nutbane in Hampshire. The site is exceptional in that the carpentry of its oak burial chamber has been well preserved, and replicates megalithic masonry techniques. The monument must have been overwhelmed by peat and waterlogging shortly after its construction. Tree-ring analysis suggests that only one or two 1.5m diameter oaks were felled to construct the tomb chamber.

LITTLE PAXTON

TL: 183627

The site of a D-shaped wooden house, now destroyed. The straight side of the house, marked by a row of post-holes, was exposed during road works. The curved sides were bounded by an irregular trench with a vertical face which was supported inside by stakes. The southern half of the floor of the house had been cut away 0.3–0.4m below ground level, to leave a bench or bed running the length of the house from the entrance along the northern side. The lower half had been covered with straw. The house was strongly built with turf walls on three sides, 0.6m thick and supported by posts and stakes. The door was at the north-west corner and the rest of the west wall and the straight wall of the D were marked by two large post-holes. Between these two post-holes the floor finished in a straight line, showing that boards, skins or wattles must have formed a solid boundary there. It seems that there were rafters radiating from a large post in the north wall, possibly indicating a hut roof that was a half-cone. The interior dimensions were 3m by 2m. A sherd of Peterborough pottery was found in the trench bottom and many worked flints were found nearby. This important example of a D-shaped turf house illustrates that there may have been many variants in neolithic house design. It may also throw some light on the significance of the C-shaped and D-shaped ritual enclosures, which could have been derived from domestic architecture.

MAXEY CURSUS

TF: 127077

Part of an important neolithic and early bronze age ritual focus, the Maxey Cursus seems to have had its beginning – or ending – at the banks of the River Welland. It ran south-east for about 850m and then turned slightly to run on a new alignment a further 900m to the ESE. This reorientation took the cursus very close to the Etton causewayed enclosure. It may have run tangentially past the

enclosure or stopped at its entrance: it is difficult to infer the exact relationship because the crucial section has been destroyed by the excavation of Maxey Cut. It is not known whether the cursus ended at the causewayed enclosure or continued even further to the south-east. About 50 circular structures of various kinds are clustered round and on the cursus, most of them significantly later in date.

Construction of the cursus was piecemeal, and it is thought that the north-west segment is much later than the south-east. The cursus ditches are about 2.5m wide, 58m apart, and seem to have misaligned sections: halfway between Maxey Great Henge and Etton causewayed enclosure, for example, there is a 'step', where the north ditch slips off course. There are also gaps. It seems that it was the general effect or the overall alignment that was important, rather than the finish of the monument.

The site has been scheduled for destruction by gravel extraction (Figure 7).

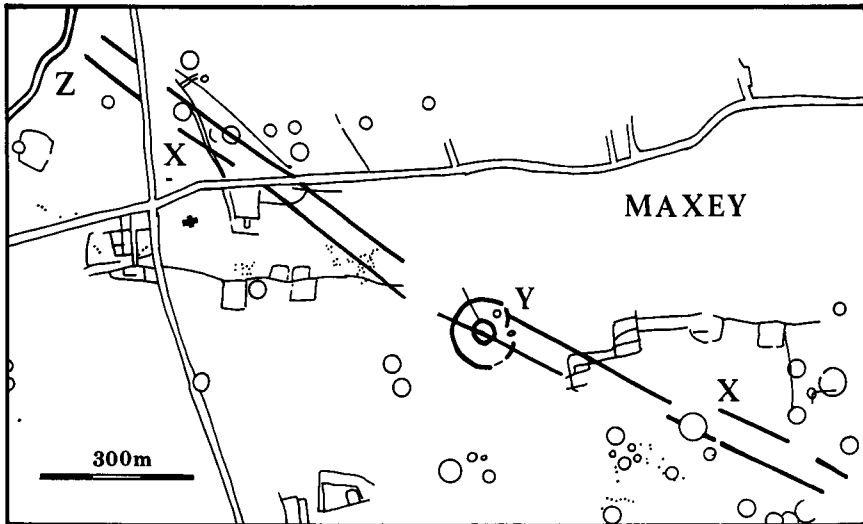


Figure 7 Maxey ritual complex. The Maxey Cursus (X) passes across the site of the later henge (Y) to the River Welland (Z).

MAXEY GREAT HENGE

TF: 127077

This large henge monument straddled the Maxey Cursus and had several unusual features, including a round mound at its centre and an oval barrow actually in its entrance causeway. The first stage in the development of the site was turf-stripping in the centre of the henge and the entrance area, where the oval barrow was later to be built. Then the main monument was constructed, starting with a ring ditch at the centre, spoil from the ditch being cast up inside to form a mound. The outer ditch was probably dug out at the same time and the spoil from this

thrown outwards to make the characteristic external henge bank; this was 125m in diameter, making it slightly larger than the earthwork at Stonehenge. After this, the site of the oval barrow was developed, initially as an imposing oval enclosure 15m by 10m, formed out of 156 massive squared oak beams set upright to make a continuous wooden wall. Substantial though this was, it was not allowed to stand for long. It was burnt down and, at the same time, the bounding outer bank of the henge was pushed back into its ditch and the central mound was similarly pushed back into the ring ditch. As a result, the monument was virtually destroyed.

The final phase of construction of the Maxey Great Henge followed quickly. A new mound was built at the centre, covering the entire area of the earlier ring ditch; as no burial was included in it, it cannot really be considered a barrow. At the same time, an oval turf barrow was built at the henge entrance, on the site of the burnt-out oval enclosure; first a crouched burial was deposited at the centre of the blackened enclosure, and then the barrow mound was piled on top. The soil below the barrow was found to be enriched in a way that implies that the earlier enclosure had been used as a mortuary enclosure.

Despite all this activity, none of the episodes seems to have lasted very long. The whole flurry of ritual was probably over in as little as a decade.

Within the outer ditch of the henge, but close to it on the north-west side, were two circles of pits, one 14m and the other 10m in diameter. Each circle consisted of ten pits, and one of them overrode the south-west ditch of the cursus, which runs right through the henge, proving that at least one post circle post-dated the cursus.

The Great Henge yielded some unique carved ritual objects. Two of them were antlers, a third was a red deer rib. The antlers were highly polished and ornamented with geometric chevrons cut into them, the designs being similar to those seen on Boyne megaliths and Grooved ware pottery. The incisions carry traces of red paint (ferric oxide). The deer rib also had carvings on it, but was painted all over, two-thirds black, one-third red.

The site of Maxey Great Henge is on the River Welland's first terrace and, despite its undoubted archaeological importance, is scheduled for destruction by gravel extraction.

ORTON LONGUEVILLE

TL: 160963

A settlement site, indicated by storage pits, a scatter of Peterborough ware, and a few sherds of Grooved ware pottery – all found during gravel working in the early 1930s. The site is now built over, so that it is a settlement once more.

SHIPPEA HILL

A settlement site which supplied Sir Harry Godwin with evidence of the problematic 'elm decline', believed to have occurred rather suddenly around 3400–3300 BC. It is thought now that the elm decline detected in the pollen record was not caused by climatic change but by elm disease or some kind of land management technique. The settlement itself has been radiocarbon dated to 3000–2920 bc (3700–3600 BC).

STONEA GRANGE**Wimblington**

TL: 449936

Two parallel ditches, tentatively identified as a cursus, are aligned on the barrow excavated in 1961–2. No artefacts were found in the cursus ditches, which in itself suggests a prehistoric date and is consistent with the negative evidence found in cursus ditches generally: they tend to be 'clean' monuments. A second barrow and a circular cropmark have been located nearby, and two flint arrow-heads and some late neolithic sherds show that the area was occupied.

SWAFFHAM PRIOR

TL: 561650

An occupation site on Lower Chalk on the fen edge, which was first settled in the mesolithic period. Neolithic flint and stone axes, arrow-heads and awls prove that the site was occupied in the new stone age too. There were ring ditches in the area as well, at TL: 587615, 599630, 581645 (still visible), 580636, 579636, but they have mostly been ploughed out.

WIMBLINGTON

TL: 450931

A low ploughed round barrow of bronze age date was found to rest on top of a late neolithic occupation surface. The neolithic occupation comprised pits, stake-holes, worked flints, charcoal, bone, 600 sherds of coarse red pottery (many comparable with Ebbsfleet, Mildenhall, Whiteleaf and Grooved ware styles). A slightly later horizon yielded two beaker sherds.

CHESHIRE

THE BRIDESTONES**Congleton**

SJ: 905621

One of only two known megalithic monuments in Cheshire, this stands 5 km E of Congleton at a height of 250m OD; it really belongs to the Pennines rather than to the Plain. The burial chamber now stands denuded of its covering mound, which was at one time, in the eighteenth century, 110m long and 11m wide. The chamber is 5.5m long and 1.5m wide, and lies W–E. Halfway along its length is a broken porthole stone: an upright slab with a hole in it just large enough to pass fragments of a corpse through. It is recorded that there were originally two additional chambers. A second chamber in the centre of the mound was 2m square and 0.7m high. Traces of the third chamber were noticed in 1766. These chambers and the covering mound were destroyed in the eighteenth century. In 1764, several cartloads of stone were taken from the monument to construct Dial Lane. Successive plans of the forecourt stone circle show how it too was progressively reduced. At the eastern end of the chamber, there are still visible traces of a semicircular forecourt, marked by large stones. The forecourt has been badly damaged and overgrown, but it seems that it was originally surrounded by at least a partial and probably a complete circle of standing stones, of which three survive. They enclosed a cobbled area covered by pyre ashes. The style of the monument suggests that it might be an outlier of the Scottish ‘Clyde–Carlingford’ type of tomb. It nevertheless has affinities with at least one other monument in the area – the forecourt tomb at Five Wells near Taddington, not far away in Derbyshire.

HENBURY HENGE

SJ: 887728

The site of an oval setting of ball-shaped boulders. Ploughing in 1971 at Brickbank Farm revealed two large erratic blocks 30–40cm in diameter. More boulders were found built into the field boundaries and into a nearby stile. The stones had passed unnoticed because the field had, as far as is known, only been ploughed once before 1971. Systematic excavation of the site revealed 11 stone sockets up to 0.5m deep, arranged in an oval surrounding a central pit. A thirteenth pit, which lay outside the oval setting to the east, showed signs of great heat: it was, moreover, associated with a large deposit of charcoal. It has been suggested that the setting may have been designed to mark the winter solstice but, given the compass bearing of the thirteenth pit, this seems unlikely. The monument has yet to be dated, but it is probably late neolithic.

CORNWALL

LINDOW MOSS

Mobberley

SJ: 819807

Under the peat layer where Lindow Man was found, there is a layer of charcoal which represents the neolithic forest clearance episode. The charcoal has been radiocarbon dated to 4980 bp (3700 BC). On a sand island in the bog, a thin scatter of worked flints gives us further, if scanty, evidence of the presence of neolithic people in the area.

CORNWALL

BALLOWALL BARROW

St Just

SW: 356312

A large, complex and multi-phase chambered tomb. It consists of a large closed chamber sealed inside a central conical cairn, which in turn is surrounded by a later collar or cairn-ring. The central chamber contained a number of stone cists and a T-shaped ritual pit: this alone remains. Two further cists can be seen in the narrow corridor between the central cairn and the collar, which contains a smaller chamber, again with a pit dug into its floor. Set into the outer wall of the collar, on the south-west side, is an entrance grave with two capstones still in place.

Probably the monument began as a conventional neolithic Scillonian chambered tomb, and it was developed in the middle bronze age with the building of the conical cairn and cists, and finally with the addition of the collar. But the dating sequence is uncertain, and the monument as it stands is unique (Figure 8).

THE BLIND FIDDLER

Sancreed

SW: 425282

A standing stone 3.3m high, also known as the Trenuggo Stone. Fragments of bone were found buried at its foot in the nineteenth century, but it is not known whether these were contemporary with the raising of the stone: they may have been deposited much later.

BOSCAWEN-UN STONE CIRCLE

St Buryan

SW: 412274

Nineteen regularly spaced stones are enclosed within a modern field wall. This low-lying stone circle is 23m in diameter, with a leaning stone pillar 2.5m high at its centre. This central stone may have been the focus for foundation deposits and offerings; it does not appear to have any astronomical significance. The circle

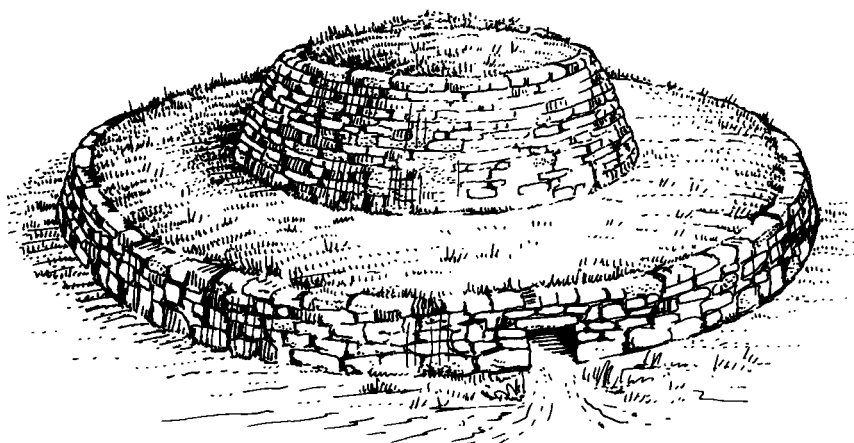


Figure 8 Ballowall Barrow. A reconstruction, showing what the monument originally looked like.

was restored in 1862, when three fallen stones were re-erected and a hedge cutting the circle in two was removed. It is to be hoped that similar consideration will one day be given to the stone rings at Avebury. An experimental trench cut through the site revealed nothing. A west-facing gap in the circle may have been the monument's entrance. There are two outlying stones to the north-east, at SW: 415276 and 417277.

This circle is probably the 'Beisgawen yn Dumnonia' named in the old Welsh Triads as one of the Three Principal Gorsedd's of the Island of Britain, which implies that it held some considerable importance in ancient times as a ceremonial centre. Appropriately, the modern Cornish Gorsedd was inaugurated here in 1928 (Figure 9).

BRANE ENTRANCE GRAVE Sancreed

SW: 401281

This is the best example in mainland Cornwall of a type of entrance grave more commonly found in the Isles of Scilly. The barrow is 6m in diameter and 2m high, and held in place by a remarkably heavy wall of large granite blocks. On the south-east is an entrance passage that leads directly into the chamber. The chamber is 2.2m long and 1m wide and roofed with two capstones: a third, the outermost, capstone has been removed. The tomb stands on private land; permission to visit it must first be sought at Brane Farm. It is situated, unusually, on good farmland near the valley floor, but it is difficult to find. It is one of the smallest but best-preserved chambered tombs in Britain. Only discovered as late as 1863, and first recorded in 1872, it has not been tampered with since then. For some reason, the ground level both outside and inside the mound seems to have been lowered by about 0.3m since the time when the tomb was built, which may