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Get your fix pre-1066

The Neolithic Revolution -

An opportunity for broadening chronological understanding and enquiry skills at KS3

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Enquiry – Was the Neolithic revolutionary?

- First dates!
- What is a revolution?
- What do we know about Neolithic life?
- Stonehenge: Stand or Fall – play the game, will you succeed?
- Bronze Age transition – the start of multi-cultural Britain?

First dates – *Before the Romans?*

Palaeolithic – Old Stone Age: 500,000BC – 10,000BC

Modern humans – *Homo sapiens* in Britain (us!): c38,000BC

Peak of Ice Age: c18,000BC

End of Ice Age (and Woolly Mammoths!): c12,000BC

Mesolithic – Middle Stone Age: 10,000BC – 4,000BC

Britain becomes an island: c6,000BC

Neolithic – New Stone Age: 4,000BC – 2,200BC

Bronze Age: 2,600BC – 700BC

Iron Age: 800BC – 43AD



What is a revolution?

'a forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favour of a new system'

What are the causes/characteristics of a revolution?

External/internal threat

Bottom up, not top down

Happens in 'steps'/phases

New technology

Starts with economic hardship/uncertainty

New beliefs or ideas



What do we know about the Neolithic?

- People start farming.
- People start to use and make new types of stone tools.
- People start to make pottery.
- People start acquiring objects (& ideas) from the Continent.
- People start building monuments.

First Farmers – from about 6,000 years ago people began moving from a hunter-gather way of life to farming (keeping livestock & growing crops). Unlike the Mesolithic, people began to stay in one place longer, though they undoubtedly still made the most of ‘wild’ seasonal foods such as hazelnuts and blackberries



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Neolithic houses



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Neolithic houses



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[Neolithic house blog](#)

New tools – people began making different, more sophisticated, stone tools. Their ‘tool kit’ included: knives, scrapers, piercers, arrows, axes and more. Unlike the Mesolithic these tools were polished, making them stronger, but also more attractive to look at. They would also have had tools made from wood and bone, as in the Mesolithic.

Mesolithic 'Tool Kit'



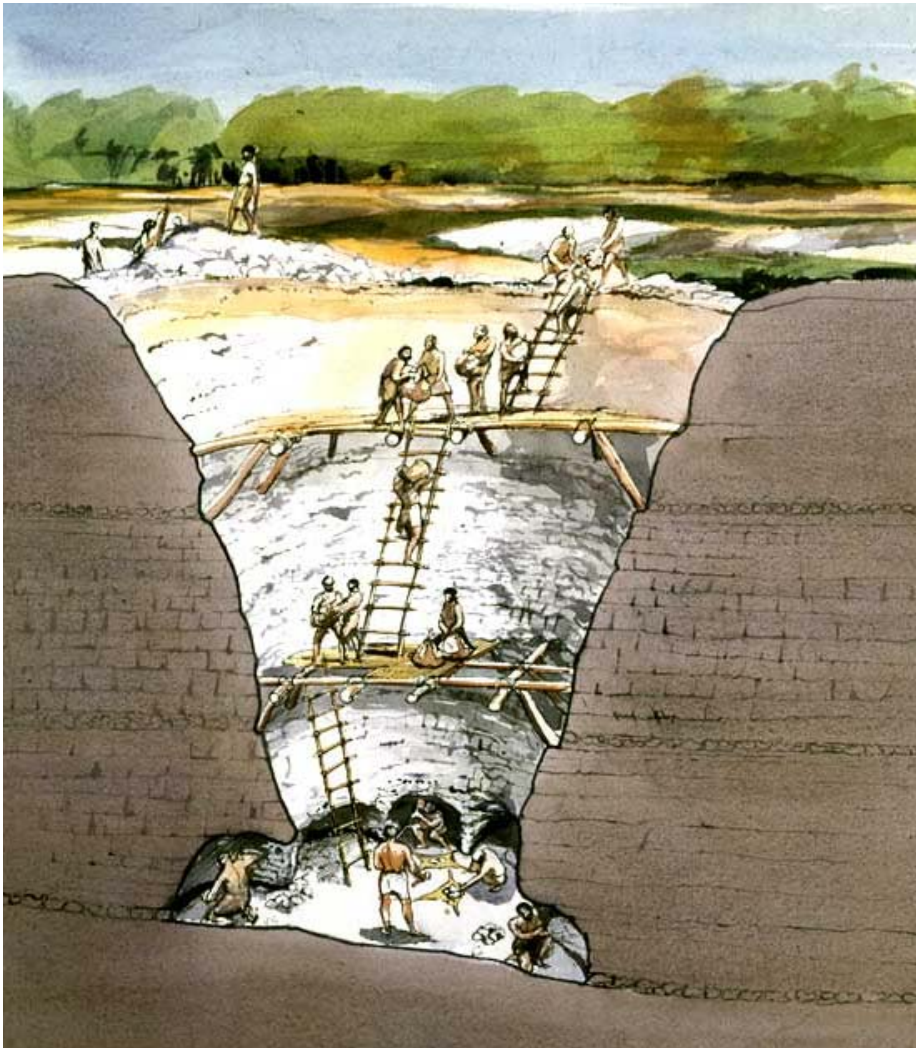
Late Neolithic 'Tool Kit'



Example: Grimes Graves Neolithic flint mines (Norfolk)



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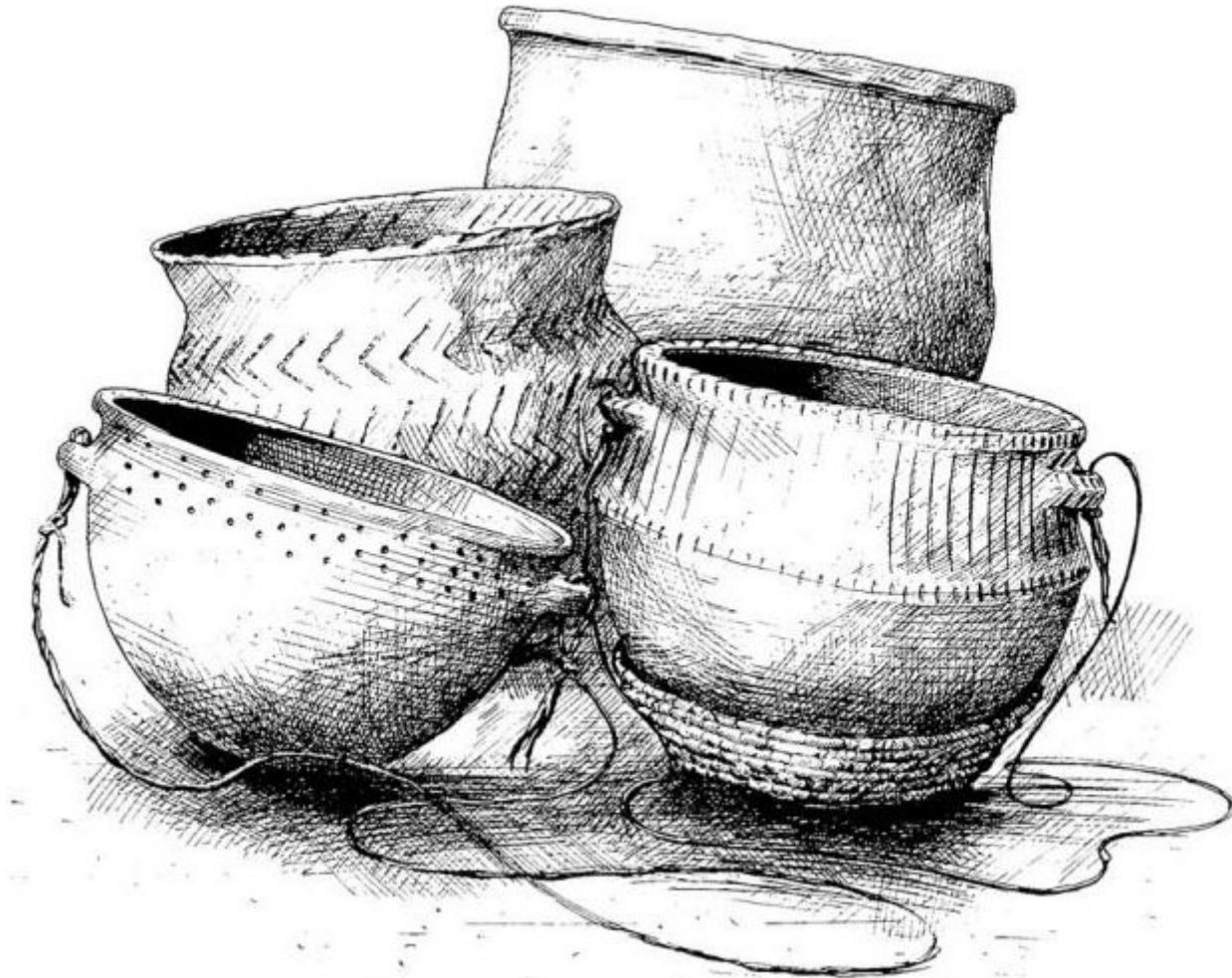


Modern replicas



Pottery – people began making clay pots. This was not done during the Mesolithic. Anything used for storing, cooking or eating food would have been made from wood, leather or basketry. Pottery is found in Late Mesolithic Scandinavia, so the technology may have come from there.

Example: Windmill Hill Neolithic pottery (Wiltshire)



New objects (& ideas?) – people began trading/acquiring traded objects over long distances. Objects from continental Europe start to appear in Britain.

Jadeite Axe from near Stonehenge (Wiltshire)



This early Neolithic axe is in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum. It is thought to have been found near Stonehenge. It is made from jadeite, a type of stone likely to have come from the Swiss Alps.

Monuments – people began making large monumental structures in the landscape. These are the first permanent manmade ‘buildings’ in the British Isles. Each would have required 100s or 1000s of ‘man hours’ to build, along with complex planning and communal working. The main type of monuments were: Enclosures, Long Barrows, Megalithic Chamber Tombs, Cursuses and Henges



Early Neolithic - Causewayed Enclosures

- Causewayed enclosures are the earliest known examples of the enclosure of open space. They are a series of banks and ditches with gaps (causeways) in between the ditches
- They formed an artificial boundary around an area, creating a distinction between 'inside' and 'outside', private and public, human and wild, and perhaps sacred and profane
- c80 causewayed enclosures are now known in the British Isles
- Archaeologists have compared them to fairgrounds: places where dispersed social groups could gather periodically on neutral ground to reaffirm their sense of community through a range of activities including feasting, crafts, and the performance of rituals associated with death
- Archaeologists now believe that the concept must have originated in mainland Europe and spread quickly through France, Germany, Scandinavia and the British Isles

Example: Windmill Hill Causewayed Enclosure (Wilts)



Example: Windmill Hill Causewayed Enclosure (Wilts)



This is a reconstruction drawing of Windmill Hill. The finds uncovered included Neolithic flint artefacts such as arrowheads, axe-heads, a sickle blade and scrapers. Numerous animal bones and skulls as well as 'ceremonial chalk cups' were also found. A type of Neolithic pottery found on sites across Wessex was first identified here and has hence taken the name of the site: Windmill Hill type pottery.

Example: Maiden Bower Causewayed Enclosure (Beds)

The screenshot shows the PastScape website interface. At the top left is the English Heritage logo. The main header features the word "PastScape" in a large, spaced-out font. A navigation bar includes "main menu" and a breadcrumb trail: "You are here: Home : Search : Search Results : Detailed Result : Maps". The main content area displays the title "MAIDEN BOWER CAUSEWAYED ENCLOSURE, CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE" in bold black text. Below the title is a satellite map from Google Maps with a red location pin. The map shows a rural area with fields and a road network, including roads labeled "High St N", "Brewers Hill Rd", "Chiltern Rd", and "A5120". A scale bar at the bottom of the map indicates 200 meters. On the left side, there is a vertical "main menu" with links to Home, About PastScape, Location Search, Advanced Search, About Searching, Saved Searches, Downloads, Links, FAQ, Feedback, Contact Us, and Cookies. At the bottom left of the menu is a small image of a building.

Early Neolithic - Long Barrows

- c300 known Long Barrows in the British Isles ([National Heritage List for England](#))
- Outside they look like a large mound of earth, up to 50m in length and 25m in width, often with one end wider and higher than the other. Invariably there are ditches alongside from where the earth to build them was dug out from
- Inside were linear wooden or stone mortuary chambers, where the (disarticulated) bones of the dead were placed, without any other artefacts
- Some had elaborate arrangements of stones or wooden posts outside the entrance, creating a screen or 'sacred' area

Example: East Heslerton Long Barrow

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P a s t S c a p e

main menu

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EAST HESLERTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Map | Satellite

Google

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our other sites

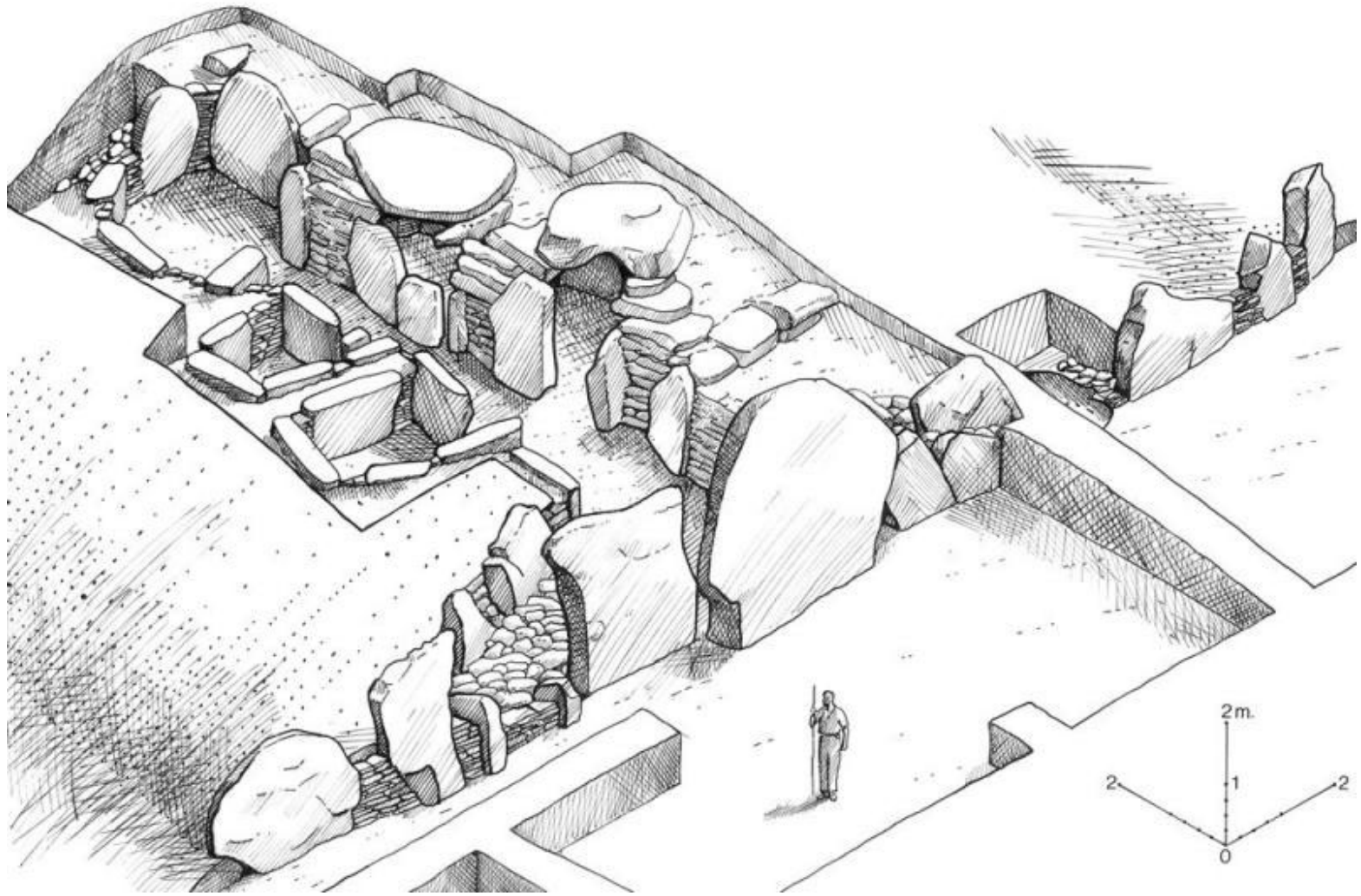
Example: West Kennet Long Barrow



Example: West Kennet Long Barrow

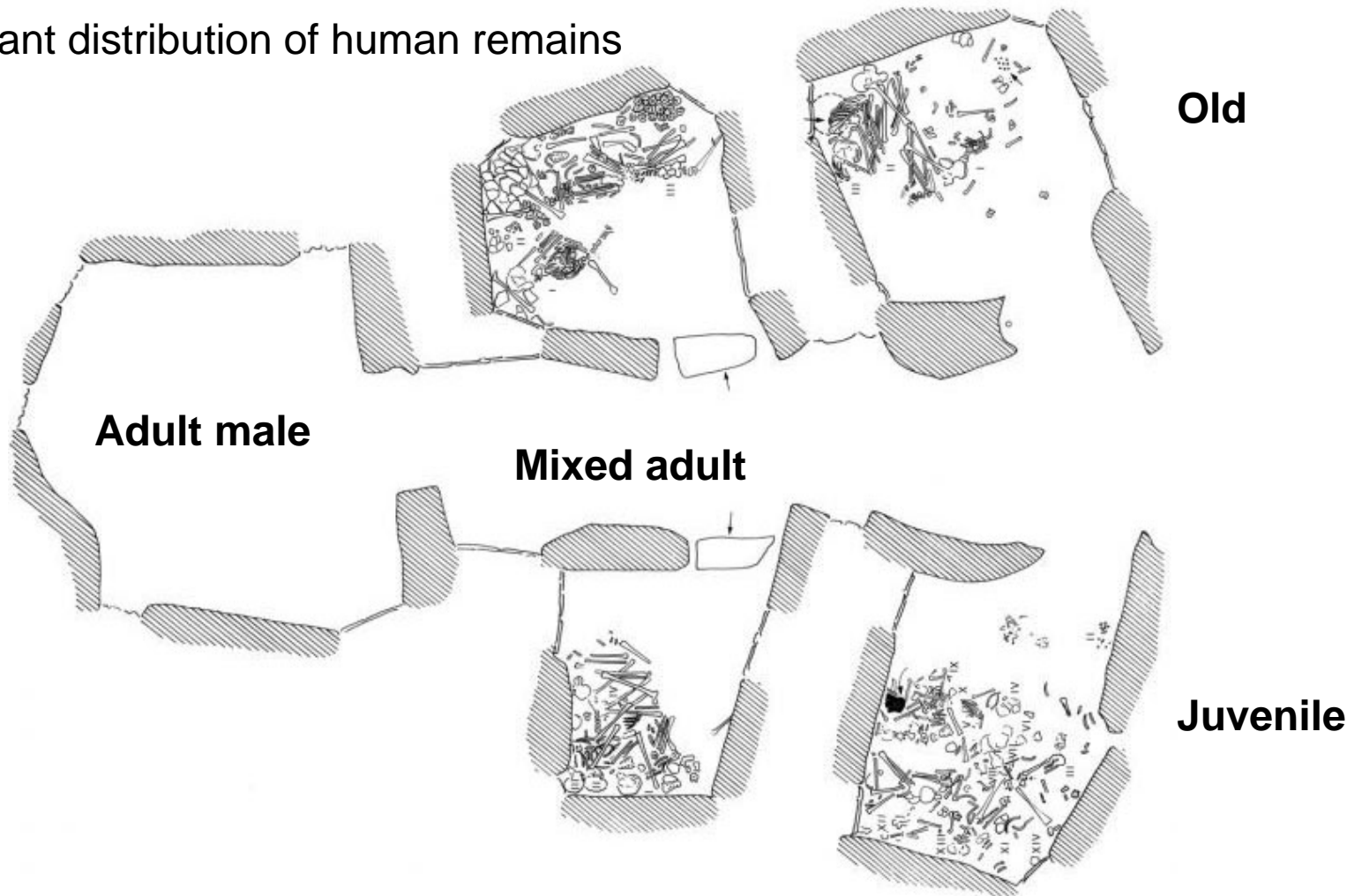


Example: West Kennet Long Barrow



Example: West Kennet Long Barrow

Dominant distribution of human remains



Early Neolithic - Megalithic Chamber Tombs

- They occur in parts of England where large stones and boulders are naturally available
- The large stones (megaliths) were placed in certain ways that formed a kind of chamber which often contained human bones
- They are often called Dolmens, Portal Tombs or Quoits
- Like the wooden or stone chambers beneath long barrows, some of these tombs were covered with mounds of earth
- Many are now just piles of stones
- Similar standing stone tombs are found across Europe and as far a field as Korea, India, the Middle East and Africa

Example: Trethevy Quoit (Cornwall)



Example: Arthur's Stone (Herefordshire)



Example: Arthur's Stone (Herefordshire)



Late Neolithic - Cursuses

- Cursus monuments are one of the most mysterious types of site in the British landscape (the British version of the Nasca lines)
- They are long and relatively narrow earthwork enclosures, usually defined by an enclosing bank with a ditch on the outside
- They are thought of as paths or processional ways
- They range in length from the 10 kilometres of the Dorset Cursus down to around 100 metres
- Gaps (causeways) tend to occur along the sides of cursus monuments, but not at their ends
- Some cursus monuments incorporated existing monuments, usually long barrows, into their earthworks. They ignore natural features cutting across rivers and valleys
- Cursus is the Latin word for 'course', as early antiquarians thought they were ancient racetracks!

Example: Stonehenge Greater Cursus (Wilts)



Late Neolithic - Henges and Circles

- They are circular monuments, comprising varying combinations of earthwork banks and ditches, timber posts and standing stones
- Unlike the other monuments henges are unique to Britain and Ireland
- They are enclosures where, unlike those with a defensive purpose, the ditch lies inside the bank (except Stonehenge which is a-typical!)
- There are at least 176 known standing stone circles, c50 earthwork henges and c60 timber/pit circles. At least 40% of stone circles were preceded by timber circles in the same place
- Although based on simple and related principles, henges and circles show great variations in size, the materials used and the arrangement of their components – no two are exactly the same!

Example: Woodhenge (Wilts)



Example: Arbor Low Henge (Derbyshire)



Example: Seahenge (Norfolk)



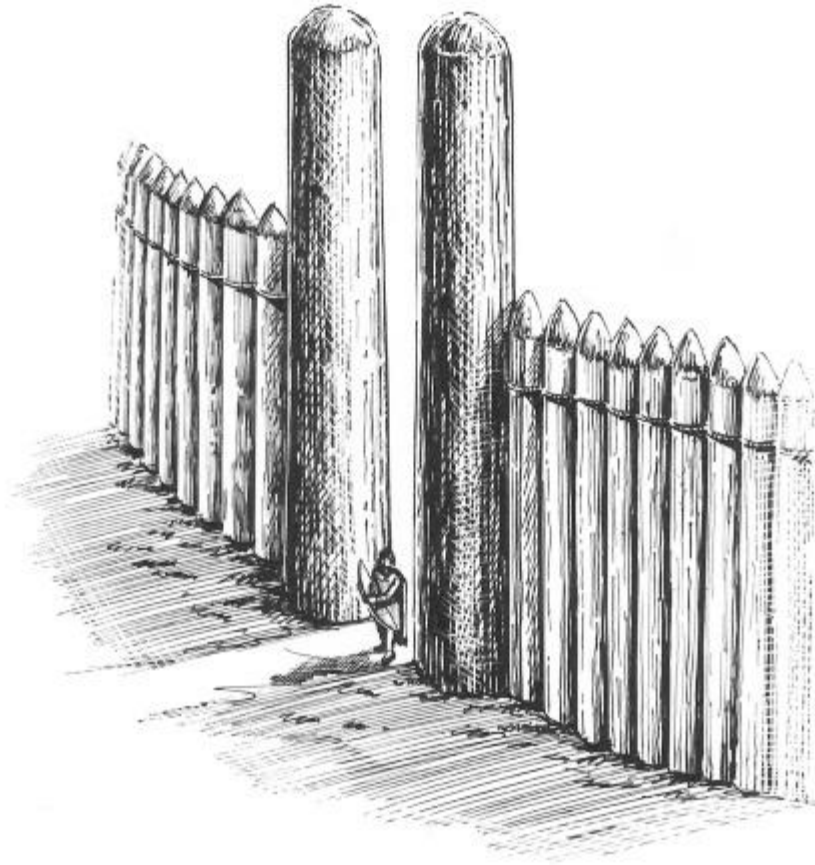
Example: Knowlton Henge (& 12thC church - Dorset)



Example: Avebury (Wilts)



Example: Mount Pleasant Henge (Dorset)



Example: Stonehenge (Wiltshire)



Play the Stonehenge Game



Stonehenge Interactive Map



The Amesbury Archer



Over 100 objects were discovered with the Archer



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What can scientific tests tell us?

- The grave of the Archer, who lived around 2,300BC, contained about 100 items, more than ten times as many objects as any other burial site from this time.
- The latest tests on the Amesbury Archer show:
 - He was a man aged between 35 and 45.
 - He was originally from the Alps region, probably Switzerland, Austria or Germany.
 - The gold hair tresses found in the grave are the earliest gold objects found in Britain.
 - The copper knives came from Spain and France.
 - He walked with a limp due to an old injury that ripped his left knee cap off!
 - They also found

- At the same archaeological site was a second skeleton of a younger man, aged 20 to 25.
- Bone analysis showed he and the Archer were related and it is likely they were **father and son**.
- Analysis of his teeth show **he grew up in southern England** but may have spent his late teens in the Midlands or north-east Scotland.

Welcome to multi-cultural Britain

Related English Heritage Publications (free downloads)

Introduction to Heritage Assets

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/criteria-for-protection/scheduling-selection-guides/IHAs/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-prehistoric-avenues-alignments/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-causewayed-enclosures/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-enclosed-prehistoric-settlements/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-megalithic-chamber-tombs/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-prehistoric-romano-british-settlements-structures/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-prehistoric-barrows-burial-mounds/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-prehistoric-henges-circles/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-prehist-linear-boundary-earthworks/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/iha-prehistoric-rock-art/>

Designation Selection Guides

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/dssg-sites-early-human-activity/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/dssg-religion-ritual/>