

THE MEDWAY MEGALITHS IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

PAUL ASHBEE

The Medway's megalithic long barrows, a uniform series with near-unmatched lofty rectangular chambers, flanked by commensurate façades, with considerable barrows contained by stone kerbs, were a concentration of the most grandiose and impressive structures of their kind in southern England. Stone-built and earthen long barrows are of similar intent. Some may be timber translated into stone or vice versa (Ashbee, 1984, 33-54; Clarke, 1982, 28). A long barrow's timber chamber, preserved by anaerobic conditions in the Cambridgeshire Fens (Haddenham, Hodder and Shand, 1988) was of slab construction, a clear copy of a stone edifice.

Neither of the Medway's groups of long barrows, those on Blue Bell Hill and their fellows on the western side, clusters upon a causewayed enclosure as in Wessex (Ashbee, 1978, 83, fig. 22). Such an enclosure could, however, have been on low ground by the Medway (Mercer, 1990; Tilley, 1996, 279-84). One may remain to be discovered or have long since been destroyed by gravel extraction. Their close-knit siting is, however, characteristic of the Northern European mainland (Midgley, 1985, 205). Although of stone, they have been included in the predominantly southern and eastern distribution of earthen long barrows (Ashbee, 1984, figs. 1, 2) and are at no great distance from the European mainland's Channel coast.

THE MEDWAY AND THE EUROPEAN MAINLAND

On the European mainland long barrows, and their like, congregate at the periphery of the loess lands, which were settled by early Neolithic farmers, the *Linear Pottery* (*Linearbandkeramik*, the abbreviation LBK is preferred to the English translation) people (Whittle, 1994, 154-66; 1996, 144-52, *passim*). Their husbandry was a stable specialisation, characterised by a speedy, sustained, spread, as is

attested by widespread similarities of pottery and long-houses. Indeed, radiocarbon dates from northern Hungary and Holland are statistically inseparable (Whittle, 1977, 253-55). There are three principal areas of long barrow proliferation, Northern Europe (Midgley, 1985; 1992), western France (Daniel, 1960) and Britain (Piggott, 1954, *passim*). They were intrinsic to the spread of agriculture into these regions, a process which gradually and profoundly changed the life of the Mesolithic indigenes. Long barrows so closely resemble the long-houses of the LBK people (whence our English Neolithic agriculture is ultimately derived) that conscious imitation must have been integral (Ashbee, 1982). Indeed, long barrow ditches even echo the construction pits which flank certain LBK long-houses (Ilett, 1984, 28, fig. 2, 12) and the Medway's megalithic long barrows would, when raised, have been surrogate long-houses (**Fig. 1**). Patently their origins result from processes that, largely, developed across the Dover Straits.

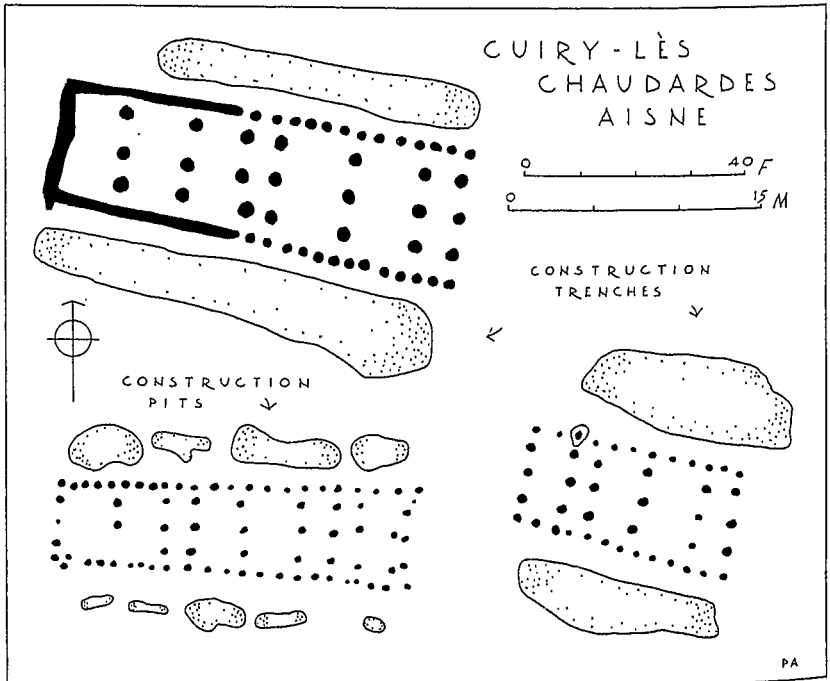


Fig. 1. LBK houses with flanking construction trenches and pits, Cuiry-lès-Chaudardes, Aisne (after F.P.V.A.)

The similarity of the Medway's long barrows to the Dutch and German series was first noticed more than a century ago (Fergusson, 1872, end map). This has, from time to time, been the subject of reassessment and restatement (Piggott, 1935, 122; 1954, 269; Daniel, 1950, 161; 1958, 105). Dispensing with the reinvocation of resemblances, it is clear that the series, at no great distance from LBK territory, across a shallower North Sea and narrower Dover Straits, is an element of the northern TRB megalithic tradition (Midgley, 1992, 406-74), and part of a pan-European, rather than an insular, process. The abbreviation TRB is from the German *Trichterbecherkultur* and is preferable to the cumbrous English usage 'Funnel-necked Beaker culture'. It is essentially the earliest Neolithic manifestation in Northern Europe, observable, despite local variations, as an entity stretching from the Netherlands to Poland. Our Medway megalithic long barrows would, initially, have been a modest western expression of an extensive, dynamic process.

THE DOVER STRAITS

Kent's chalk ridge link with the Pas-de-Calais is likely to have been breached in mid-Pleistocene times (Roe, 1981, 38, Tab. 1) and, thereafter, the waters of the Thames, Rhine, Maas and Scheldt flowed into a Channel river (Gibbard, 1995). In early Holocene times, there was, because of low sea-level, a river-cut alluvial and gravel floor linking the chalk, southern North Sea land. As sea-levels rose in early Mesolithic times there could have been estuarine conditions but, later, when the LBK farmers spread to the Calais region, the developing North Sea and Channel combined and there was a marine regime, with a narrower Channel. In the southern North Sea there was a complex of alluvial islands and the waters could thus have been largely smooth, and analogous to those where, today, the Danish archipelago impedes the Baltic (Coles, 1998, 76, fig. 11; 1999, 56).

Boat crossings would have presented few problems, either directly cross-Channel or via the estuaries and islands (Clark, 1975, 124; Jacobi, 1982, 14; Christensen, 1999). The waters were essentially a Mesolithic contact zone for the LBK farmers had land and forest traditions. Indeed, there may have been a millennium of traffic before the first Neolithic modes and usages developed upon the Kentish chalklands.

THE KENTISH MESOLITHIC BACKGROUND

Progressive marine transgression and the flooding of the North Sea

land (Coles, 1998) brought about a considerable regional modification and diversification of the fundamental Maglemosian technology and way of life, seen at Star Carr and elsewhere in Britain (Clark, 1954; Jacobi, 1976). A later Mesolithic, characterised by blade and trapeze flint industries supplanted them. In Kent there are some 250 sites from which identifiable flintwork has been collected (Wymer, 1977, 143-61). The general pattern which emerges is of bases, supplemented by periodically used sites for particular intentions and activities (Binford, 1980). There was extensive use of organic materials for tools and appliances. Antler, bone, bark, vegetable fibres, and the like, are preserved in water-logged conditions such as might have obtained, in Kent, for example, at Lower Halstow (Jessup, 1930, 41; Clark, 1932, 63-5; 1936, 158; Jacobi, 1982, 14), but which are absent from sandy contexts such as Addington (Jacobi, 1982, 16; Drewett, *et al.*, 1988, 11-23). Although a degree of technological impoverishment, brought about by separation from the European mainland, has been claimed for these Mesolithic communities, a shallow North Sea and a narrower Dover Straits would hardly have been a barrier to their not unsophisticated activities and boats.

In Kent there are grounds, radiocarbon dates (Jacobi, 1982, 22) and the apparent association of Mesolithic material with such as the Addington Chestnuts long barrow (Alexander, 1961, 3), for seeing the hunter-gatherer groups as contemporary with those practising agriculture. Side by side they could, for long, have exploited discrete areas, even within a limited environment. Indeed, Neolithic sites such as Grovehurst (Payne, 1880, 122), Wingham (Greenfield, 1960, 58) or those, mostly pits, in the vicinity of Deal (Dunning, 1966), detailed below, might even have been those of pottery-using Mesolithic peoples comparable with the Ertebølle groups of the Baltic lands (Clark, 1975, 180-98). The Neolithic would have been the eventual outcome of centuries of cultural contact between the LBK farmers of north-eastern France and the Mesolithic communities of what is now Kent.

As at the Chestnuts (Alexander, 1961, 3), considerable spreads of Mesolithic flintwork have been encountered in intimate association with a number of long barrows, notably Hazleton North and Gwernvale, members of the Cotswold-Severn series (Saville, 1990) and Kilham, in Yorkshire (Manby, 1976, 133-7). Although, in archaeological terms, these would appear to have been the activities of exclusive societies, the notion of lengthy contact, leading to acculturation, should not be lost sight of. Whereas the associations could be considered as fortuitous, particular locations, not all of which appear as topographically distinct, may have had specific qualities for those

constructing the surrogate long-houses, the long barrows. It is notable that these examples of lengthy continuity are, as at the Chestnuts, a product of careful, comprehensive, excavation.

THE CONTACT ZONE

Our islands were scarcely separated from the European mainland (Wooldridge and Goldring, 1962, 97-9; Coles, 1998, 76, fig.11; 1999) when the Mesolithic indigenes from Kent (Wymer, 1977, 143-61; Mellars and Reinhardt, 1978) encountered the LBK farmers, beyond the much narrower Dover Straits, where the loess lands extend westwards to Boulogne (Ilett, 1984). This eventually and gradually led to agrarian endeavours upon eastern Kent's chalklands and the establishment of earthen long barrows by the Stour. It was an area distant from the southern Mesolithic heartlands (Mellars and Reinhardt, 1978, 266, fig.3) but embryo agriculture endowed it with especial qualities. Its westward spread was rapid and the massive lynchet upon which Coldrum stands (Bennett, 1913, 83) was ancient when it was constructed. Julliberrie's Grave (Jessup, 1937; 1939; Ashbee, 1996) was rectangular and the long barrows by the Medway are trapezoidal, a possible reflection of the earlier and later LBK houses.

Unlike the European mainland where contacts between Mesolithic communities and LBK farmers were upon a broad front, from the Baltic to the Atlantic, the connections across the Dover Straits would have brought cereals and cattle to only a small area (Sherratt, 1990, 154, fig.2). Because of the nature of Britain, these, unless there were multiple links across greater sea distances, would, as elsewhere, have slowly spread while variations upon the fundamental long barrow formula evolved. An early extension from East Kent would have been to the chalklands of the South Downs which are lined with more or less rectangular long barrows of modest size. Some, which are associated with causewayed enclosures, constructed prior to 3000 BC, are at no great remove in length from LBK long-houses (Ashbee, 1984, 27, fig.17; Drewett *et al.*, 1988, 52).

It is not generally appreciated that loess and loessic soils obtain in Kent and could have had a role in agricultural initiation (Catt, 1978; Sheldon, 1982, 1). There are radiocarbon dates from soil profiles which show early land use in East Kent (Sheldon, 1982, 1) which are at no great remove from the LBK societies established across the Dover Straits by about 4000 BC (Ilett, 1984): Nonetheless, direct archaeological evidence for early Neolithic land-use in the area is

sadly lacking. Causewayed enclosures on the chalk of the South Downs were in being at this time (Drewett *et al.*, 1988, 35) as was comprehensive Neolithic activity in Wessex (Cunliffe, 1993, 36-8, 337-9). Pollen data reflects the clearance of woodland from the Downs by 1500 BC, if not earlier (Godwin, 1962; Sheldon, 1982, 1), while land snails from the ancient soil beneath Julliberrie's Grave (Evans, 1972, 363; 1975, 120) indicate an open environment before that long barrow was built. Pits, pottery and flintwork from the area point to established Neolithic communities espoused to Mesolithic modes (Dunning, 1966; Ashbee, 1982, 135). Their developed farming, from LBK usages, would have been adaptable and efficient.

It is not possible to point to any one factor that may have promoted the eventual move away from the hunter-gatherer Mesolithic economy. Moreover, although particular localities were favoured there was eventual transition, in varying degrees, wherever Mesolithic peoples encountered the LBK farmers (Alexander, 1978; Sherratt, 1990; Midgley, 1992). In south-eastern England forest burning and subsequent shrub growth could have led to a progressive decline in the efficiency of long established hunting procedures. Also domesticates could, in the beginning, have had a measure of prestige because of their association with an alien, seemingly superior, system. From the first contacts onwards, social and ideological institutions would have been modified to accommodate the innovations. The initial domesticates, tentatively deployed, ultimately unmade the Mesolithic subsistence economy.

Although the Dover Straits were a frontier for the LBK peoples of north-eastern France and, for that matter, of south-eastern England, it is apposite to ask why the farmers never spilled over onto the loessic soils of East Kent? The terrain was not dissimilar while the narrow seas were scarcely an insuperable barrier. It is likely, however, that in Kent, and beyond, the Mesolithic foragers were numerous and wedded to their particular usages. Thus, despite a millennium of cross-frontier contact, LBK incursions may have been discouraged. That is until they devised their own agricultural methodologies which involved surrogate long-house shrines, the long barrows.

EARLIER NEOLITHIC KENT

Apart from the long barrows, as yet undated, the evidence for earlier Neolithic activity in Kent is no more than isolated pits and artefact scatters (Smith, 1974, 104). One such site, Grovehurst, has been known since the later nineteenth century (Payne, 1880, 1-22; 1893,

1-6) and at that time was thought of as a series of sunken huts. Payne (1893) wrote as follows:-

'Here we found the floors of their dwellings, upon which were strewn stone and flint implements of every conceivable pattern, lying side by side with hundreds of splinters, chips and flakes, which had been struck off in the process of their manufacture. Rude pottery of the coarsest description was occasionally met with, together with skulls, bones, horns, etc., of the ox, the debris doubtless of daily meals. A remarkably interesting feature was the finding of several rubbers of sandstone for polishing stone celts, also a large block of the same kind of stone, which had been much worn by friction the fragments [of pottery] preserved were all of the coarsest kind and devoid of ornamentation. In some instances the pottery was half an inch in thickness, the clay having been mixed with a considerable quantity of grains of flint.'

Stuart Piggott considered the blackish flint-gritted ware fragments as all of one pot, with an original diameter of about 1ft and a thickened rim, in some places lightly turned over, below which, at intervals, were perforations (1932, 138). A fragment of reddish ware could have been from a round base. At a later juncture he indicated its possible TRB, northern European, affinities (1954, 314). Although it was thought of as of the Ebbsfleet series its earlier Neolithic affinities can be accepted (Smith, 1954, 228).

At Wingham (Greenfield, 1961, 60, fig. 3) a pit in chalky soil yielded pottery fragments, flint flakes, animal bones, an antler comb, a bone point, and sandstone rubber and rider. Seven distinct pots were represented by rim sherds and other pieces were present. They had been buried as sherds, not complete vessels. All are of round-bottomed bowls, sloping in from rim to base with simple, beaded, turned over, out-turned, or flared rims. The assemblage was notable for its high burnish and hard fabric. Antler combs, a dozen were found on Windmill Hill (Smith, 1965, 125), have been encountered on the European mainland in Belgium (Childe, 1940, 41) and at Heikendorf, near Kiel, in Schleswig-Holstein (Piggott, 1956, 99). The flint flakes were derived from a single nodule, and as at Fussell's Lodge (Ashbee, 1966, 23), could be fitted together. The animal bones were of ox, ovicaprid, pig and red deer (the comb was part of an antler beam). It is noteworthy that rims of open bowls, comparable with those from Wingham, were present among the sherds from the Chestnuts, at Addington (Alexander, 1961, 36-42, fig. 11).

Pottery from East Kent, the Deal area, Preston, Ramsgate and Folkestone, collated by G. C. Dunning (1966), was for the greater part open bowls. It was from pits, and probable pits, circumstances comparable with Grovehurst and Wingham. Of particular note was a

pit at Mill Road, Upper Deal, where the parts of some six vessels, open bowls, were at the bottom of a flint-packed pit, which also had in it flint flakes and a grain rubber. Closely similar pottery has since been found, in an area of flint implements, which included a leaf-shaped arrowhead and parts of polished axes, on an ancient clay surface beneath peat, at Birchington (Macpherson-Grant, 1969). The sites at Deal were upon a coastal spread of brickearth from which was obtained a considerable, seemingly related, flint assemblage (Dunning, 1966, 18-24). At Ramsgate a large bowl was in the same pit as inhumation burials while at Preston, near Wingham, a hearth in brickearth, had by it some sixty small plain sherds as well as flakes, cores and a piece of a polished axe. One rim sherd was of an open bowl.

Mindful of the broader English scene, G. C. Dunning (1966, 17) considered this Kentish pottery as comprising a discrete derivative group, with links to other English regions. Open bowls (Clarke, 1982, 27, fig. 9), characteristic of eastern England, are not out of keeping with those of the earliest TRB series despite the virtual absence of flat bases (Midgley, 1992, 193). Unlike other areas of Northern Europe there was, in England, little elaboration of form although the later Ebbsfleet, Peterborough, Fengate and Grooved Ware traditions are comprehensively decorated. These Kentish sites provide little evidence of agriculture; at Wingham, however, there were the bones of domestic animals, which, because of selective breeding, are also artefacts. In general these isolated, accidentally encountered, pits and apparent deposits, could well be no more than elements of much larger concentrations, as for example, at Hurst Fen, in Suffolk (Clark, *et al.*, 1960). The palpable absence of unequivocal houses and the fact that, causewayed enclosures apart, all evidence of earlier Neolithic occupation, the scattered pits, hearths and occasional posts, with pottery, flints, stones and other apparent rubbish, might be more indicative of an enduring Mesolithic mode of life than has hitherto been supposed, although archaeological evidence of contacts between Mesolithic and Neolithic communities hardly exists. It should not be overlooked that some of the earlier TRB settlement sites were similarly ephemeral and shifting (Midgley, 1992, 317). Nonetheless, as elsewhere at the margins of the vast LBK territory, there were profound changes within Mesolithic societies which gave rise to long barrows and, in the fullness of time, agricultural usages (Sherratt, 1990; Midgley, 1992, 355-405).

Rescue archaeology, near Ramsgate (Shand, 1998), has revealed concentric ditches, seemingly part of a causewayed enclosure, which supplements the pattern of pits and scatters. Although evocative of the systems surrounding some LBK villages (Ashbee, 1982), there is

much to suggest that these Thanet ditches, formed from a series of pits, may have been an ordered, concentrated, expression of the pit principles. Deposits of animal bones, including two cattle skulls, with marine shells and pottery sherds, as well as indications of episodic flint knapping, repeated what is now a recognised formula (Smith, 1971, 96-101). Parts of human skulls may denote traffic with long barrows.

At no great distance from the Medway's eastern bank megalithic long barrows, rescue excavation has disclosed an ostensible long-house (Denison, 1999). A pattern of post-holes and bedding-trenches indicates a timber structure some 65ft (20m) in length and 22ft (7m) in breadth. In the absence of flanking pits or ditches, rendering for the panels, between the vertical members, was presumably dug from the Gault close by. A number of seemingly-Neolithic houses are known in England and Ireland (Ashbee, 1982, 137), but this example, on Blue Bell Hill, is the first to be reasonably comparable with an LBK house-plan. The associated pits do not, however, necessarily connote a domestic function. Unless the remains of further houses are found, betokening a settlement, it could be thought that this erstwhile structure was an exemplar for the megalithic long barrows, surrogate long-houses. Nonetheless, it is perhaps significant that indications of a structure similar to that of an LBK house has appeared in Kent, no more than about fifty miles from the European mainland.

The pits and scatters which have been found in East Kent, from time to time, are only about 25 miles from the LBK villages of the Pas-de-Calais. Thus some of them may be the initial, clear, manifestations of Neolithic activity on what is now English soil. As has been stressed above, they have a pronounced Mesolithic character.

An integral feature of our first Neolithic was the spread of polished flint and stone axes; indeed they were for long its type-fossils. There are numerous Kentish flint examples and stone sources have been identified (Clarke, 1982, 28). Such axes accompany everywhere the beginning of farming as they are notably effective for timber felling and working, although it must not be overlooked that timber could have been taken from beaver dams and lodges (Ashbee, 1984, 80; Coles and Orme, 1983). In England the massive timber structures were mostly the earthen long barrows (Ashbee, 1966), as groups of houses comparable with those of the LBK settlements (Whittle, 1994, 157) and the later TRB people may not, it seems, have developed. Sarsen stone moving and positioning, however, as by the Medway, would have involved a considerable use of appropriate timbers, all sized and cut.

Of note are the hoards, or caches, of flint axes from Eastern England, two being from Kent. There is good reason for flint axes to be put into the earth in that their inherent moisture may be preserved (Pitts, 1996, 340). Within the TRB territory of the European mainland, hoards or caches of axes were placed in chosen waterlogged environments, some of which may be votive (Midgley, 1992, 282). The Bexley Heath hoard is of particular note in that it could be a woodworker's selection of axes, heavy and light, including an adze. Seven pieces were found but only five reached the British Museum (Spurrell, 1891; Smith, 1921, 117-8); Jessup, 1930, 52; Pitts, 1996, 12). Three flaked axes, possibly cached prior to polishing, have been found at Pembury (Tester, 1951) while three polished axes from Saltwood may have been in a grave (Pitts, 1996, 367). The northern flint axe from Julliberrie's Grave, broken and incorporated into the core of the long barrow, was compared with a similar example from Canterbury (Jessup, 1939, 268, fig. 1). A similar square-sided adze was dug from sandy soil at Bearsted (Cook, 1934, 195; Druce, 1935, xliii).

LONG BARROW USAGES

Megalithic long barrows had a larger form, and a function which was the antithesis of the LBK long-houses. As is illustrated by the bones from Coldrum's chamber (Keith, 1913; 1925), they were the foci for rituals involving human remains. There was selection, and skulls, arms, legs and hands were significant (Hodder, 1990, 246). At Coldrum skulls were well represented. Access to chambers was, presumably, controlled and from time to time bones were taken away or added to (Piggott, 1962, 66-7; 1972, 43; Smith, 1965, 137, 251; Ashbee, 1966, 39; Woodward, 1993, 3). If as seems likely, these usages involving bones took place over a long period, before they were covered and sealed by occupation debris (Piggott, 1962, 26, 68), we see only the final depositions. It may have signified a relationship with ancestors and a settlement but could also be linked with agricultural efficacy, particularly when moves were made on to various, sometimes unsuitable, soil regimes (de Valera and Ó Nualláin, 1961; Ashbee, 1978, 89).

Animal bones have also been found associated with long barrows (Ashbee, 1984, 158-60; Hodder, 1990, 250), indeed some unburned pieces were encountered at the Chestnuts (Alexander, 1961, 158-60). Apart from the oxen heads and hooved hides hung from portals (Piggott, 1973, 309), ox bones have been found with chamber

deposits and in mounds and ditches (Ashbee, 1966, Pl. XV, a). In Yorkshire, however, Mortimer found pig bones, including some twenty jaws, associated with the Hanging Grimston long barrow (1905, 102-5). Like oxen, pigs are meat animals and thus feasting as an element of the usages centred upon long barrows seems likely.

ENVOI

The emergence of the economic, technological and social circumstances that we term the Neolithic was an infinitesimally slow, piecemeal, process. Kent is a terrain at no great distance from the developed LBK societies on the loessic soils of the Pas-de-Calais and thus, because of its contiguity and likely social intercourse, it may have been one of the first English regions to embrace subsistence changes. These were, however, only partial, as it has for long been recognised (Piggott, 1954, 15, *passim*) that fundamental Mesolithic usages endured and are to be seen as an aspect of the manifestations of our diverse insular Neolithic.

Stone eminently suitable for the enduring examples of the earth and timber surrogate long-houses, seen as integral to the changes in train, was a prominent feature of the Medway valley (Ashbee, 1993, 58). Although the distances were not great, the workforces had to manipulate blocks of Stonehenge calibre (Cleal *et al.*, 1995, 566). Indeed, their size, with the high chambers, massive facades and great barrows, reflects their erstwhile cogency. Because of their proximity to LBK territory and culture, only some fifty miles away, an expression of qualities transcending the earthen mounds by the Stour may have been intended, for their developed, close-knit, siting recalls LBK village patterns.

The current reduced state of the Kit's Coty House long barrow (Philp and Dutto, 1985, fig.7) shows that it is unlikely to have been preceded by a more modest, earthen and timber, structure, as, for example, at Wayland's Smithy (Whittle, 1991). Nonetheless, it is still possible that traces of earlier monuments may remain beneath others. The remains of the long barrows appended to the Lower Kit's Coty House and the Coffin Stone could conceal traces, as might the Addington long barrow and its fellows.

The Coffin Stone and Coldrum long barrows were sited upon lynchets, the size of which denotes cultivated fields of some antiquity when they were set-up, an undertaking which would have demanded an appropriate economic surplus. We do not know, however, in which order the Medway's long barrows were constructed, although embryo

agricultural activities may have determined their location. It is possible that an apposite cluster was completed by Blue Bell Hill, while those west of the Medway may not, as a group, have developed beyond their present complement.

It seems likely that these long barrows, in the light of their chamber deposits, had especial, if not ultramundane significance and that thus the clusters were, in their totality, hallowed precincts. Indications of this are the Bronze Age burials, later Bronze Age gold from the Medway, richly furnished Iron Age burials, all from Aylesford, and a Roman temple on Blue Bell Hill (Ashbee, 1993, 62-3). The close-knit grouping emphasises a common relationship and that they could have been visited in time-honoured succession by groups of people, guided by the ordained functionaries. Because of the grandiose proportions of almost all the chamber interiors, the ministrants could have entered them in a dignified manner, an action difficult elsewhere. Portal stones may not have been positioned until chamber deposits were finally sealed with occupation debris, soil and chalk. Such chambers, within their long barrows, may have been in use for millennia before they were sealed. Indeed, the crumbs of Beaker pottery found at Kit's Coty House (Cook, 1936) may remain from such an ultimate undertaking. The antiquity, in communal memory of the final sealing of a chamber, and perhaps portal stone erection, may, at least in earlier times, have determined sitings and foregathering sequences.

Megalithic long barrows with commodious chambers are not unknown elsewhere in Britain (Ashbee, 1993, 61) but nowhere, except by the Medway, is there such an adherence to grandiose dimensions. As they may well have been some of the first of their kind there can be no question of emulation or constructional competition (Tilley, 1996, 160). The Medway formula, long barrows of trapezoidal plan, flowered in Wessex in timber and chalk-rubble at Fussell's Lodge (Ashbee, 1966) and in megalithic form in Northern Wiltshire (Piggott, 1962, 57-65; Barker, 1984). Indeed, Wayland's Smithy II, apart from its transepted chamber (Whittle, 1991, 65, fig. 2), would have closely resembled a Medway stone-bounded long barrow. Here, as by the Medway, the facade was integral to the kerbing. Thereafter came the Cotswolds (Darvill, 1982) and subsequently we enter a realm of complexity and usages distant from the Dover Straits and LBK sources. Despite regional diversity, which reflects the lengthy, piecemeal, processes which led to agricultural subsistence, it should not be forgotten that south-eastern England is the western extremity of the North European Plain. Moreover, the Medway's megalithic long barrows are a part of a fundamental pan-European phenomenon which covers much of the western reaches of our continent.

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