


# Iron Age West End

The image shows three round, white-washed huts with conical thatched roofs, typical of Iron Age architecture. The huts are arranged in a row, with the one on the right having an open doorway. The background shows a landscape with green fields and a red field under a cloudy sky.

**Presentation by  
Guy Consterdine  
at West End Village Society AGM  
20 February 2018**

This is a pdf version of the Powerpoint presentation I gave at the WEVS AGM.

Some slides have been modified with added captions to make them self-explanatory without my spoken narrative.

A few additional slides (with grey text like this) are entirely new to cover certain comments.

# For those who don't know me

I have lived in West End for 50 years

## Connection with WEVS:

I was one of four founders of WEVS in 1973;  
the first Chairman; served on the Committee for many  
years

Member of Village Design Statement team

## Currently:

Secretary of West End Action Group

Co-founder & Secretary of Fairfield Lane Residents  
Association

- **Iron Age settlement discovered, summer 2017**
- **In fields around Malthouse Farm**
- **On Martin Grant Homes (MGH) land for 95 homes**
- **Condition of planning permission: archaeological survey before construction begins. Conducted by Cotswold Archaeology**

**This evening: review of findings so far:**

- **as known while excavations in progress**
- **updates I received from Cotswold Archaeology**
- **speculation by me (amateur enthusiast!)**

**Full report on findings & lab analysis by Cotswold Archaeology due in early summer**

**I had already been in touch with MGH – for West End Action Group, and Fairfield Lane Residents Association**

**MGH not planning to publicise finds while excavations ongoing**

**So I talked to archaeologists on site, frequently, as excavations progressed.**

**Kept village informed through several media (next slide)**



WEST END VILLAGE SOCIETY  
www.westend.org.uk Your Village, Your Voice

AUTUMN  
JOURNAL  
ISSUE 185

### Chairman's Chat

Dear Members,  
We have had a busy summer. Look at what's been happening.  
We had very successful stands at ...

In this issue	
1	Chairman's Chat
2	Iron Age West End
4	From East Enders to West End...

### Iron Age West End

Guy Consterdine

"I walk down my garden with all sorts of thoughts of who might have lived here thousands of years before me".  
That's one of the reactions I've heard to the news that an Iron Age settlement has been found at West End, in the fields behind Malthouse Farm, Benner Lane, where Martin Grant Homes are to build 95 dwellings. The reaction is that Iron Age people – members of a

### West End Action Group (WEAG)

29 July 2017

### Archaeological excavations at Martin Grant Homes site

Report by Guy Consterdine, Secretary, WEAG

There have been exciting finds in the fields behind Malthouse Farm, Benner Lane, where Martin Grant Homes are soon to build 95 dwellings: an Iron Age settlement dating back to about 2,500 years ago; a Bronze Age storage or rubbish pit which may be up to 5,000 years old; and some prehistoric flint remains.

These were identified during the statutory archaeological excavations in preparation for the building of new houses.



### Fairfield Lane Residents Association

I have an update on the excavations in the Malthouse Farm fields.  
The Bronze Age site: the area where the storage pit was found.

# Woking Advertiser

Your local edition of the Surrey Advertiser covering Woking, Bfleet and Chobham

www.getsurrey.co.uk/woking

## Evidence of Iron Age activity found

CHRISTOPHER MCKEON

Excavations working at West End have found evidence of an Iron Age settlement on the site of a housing development.  
The dig at Malthouse Farm, Benner Lane, near the end of the road, has revealed the foundations of two buildings, a granary and a series of pottery storage jars.  
The finds are believed to be the first evidence of Iron Age activity in West End, although excavations from the 1960s have previously been said to suggest that the settlement was founded in the Iron Age.  
Archaeologists have also discovered a bronze storage pit, which could have been used for storing grain.

Iron Age pits, suggesting people may have lived in West End for up to 5,000 years.  
The excavation is taking place prior to the construction of 95 houses at the Malthouse Farm site by Martin Grant Homes.  
Archaeologists from Cornwall Archaeology, who have been contracted for the work by Martin Grant Homes, are expected to begin a detailed excavation at the beginning of August, using hand tools such as trowels and brushes.  
Soil and material from the site will also be sent for laboratory analysis, looking in particular for evidence of people's diet.  
The work will take around three months, after which the site will be covered up and construction will begin.  
Final publication of the archaeological findings is not expected until May 2018.  
Martin Grant Homes does not expect the work to delay construction of houses on the site.  
Guy Consterdine, secretary of the West End Action Group, said: "This is an exciting discovery."  
"There are no other known Iron Age remains in West End, and this will help fill the gap in our knowledge of West End's history, between the Bronze Age burials and the Roman road that runs across the Old Park."  
"Today we are just the beginning of a very long-term archaeological look at how the site developed over time."

## Bisley and West End Parish News



Iron Age West End

Don't forget the West End & Windlesham Agricultural & Horticultural Show - 9th September - see page 10



GREEN-FINGERED GARDENERS ARE SO BLOOMIN' MARVELLOUS  
PAGE 16



STILL ONLY 50p

SCOUTS WERE PREPARED FOR ALL-WEATHER HOLIDAYS  
PAGE 17



# Chobham News & West End's Iron Age history is uncovered

Best for LOCAL news THURSDAY  
LOCAL FAMILY-OWNED INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER | 16 LOWER GUILDFORD ROAD, KNAPHILL, WOKING, GU21 2EG | EMAIL: editor@wokingnews.co.uk

## West End's Iron Age history is uncovered

by Rob Searle

Excavations that people lived in West End around 2,500 years ago have been uncovered on a site where new homes are to be built.  
Archaeologists have uncovered the remains of an Iron Age settlement on the Malthouse Farm land in Benner Lane, with evidence of even earlier inhabitants found. The land is being surveyed by a



PAST UNearthED - archaeologists at work on the Malthouse Farm housing site

some medieval remains discovered another part of the fields, there appears to be a pattern of continuous occupation in West End for some 3,000 to 5,000 years.  
During the last week, the archaeologists have extended their excavation of the Age site by removing the top soil, beginning a painstaking, detailed excavation of the ground.

## **A couple of definitions:**

**Bronze Age: c3000-800 BC**

**Iron Age: c800 BC – 100 AD**



**West End has Bronze Age barrows  
(burial mounds) unique in Surrey –  
on Brentmoor Heath**

# A 1930s photograph

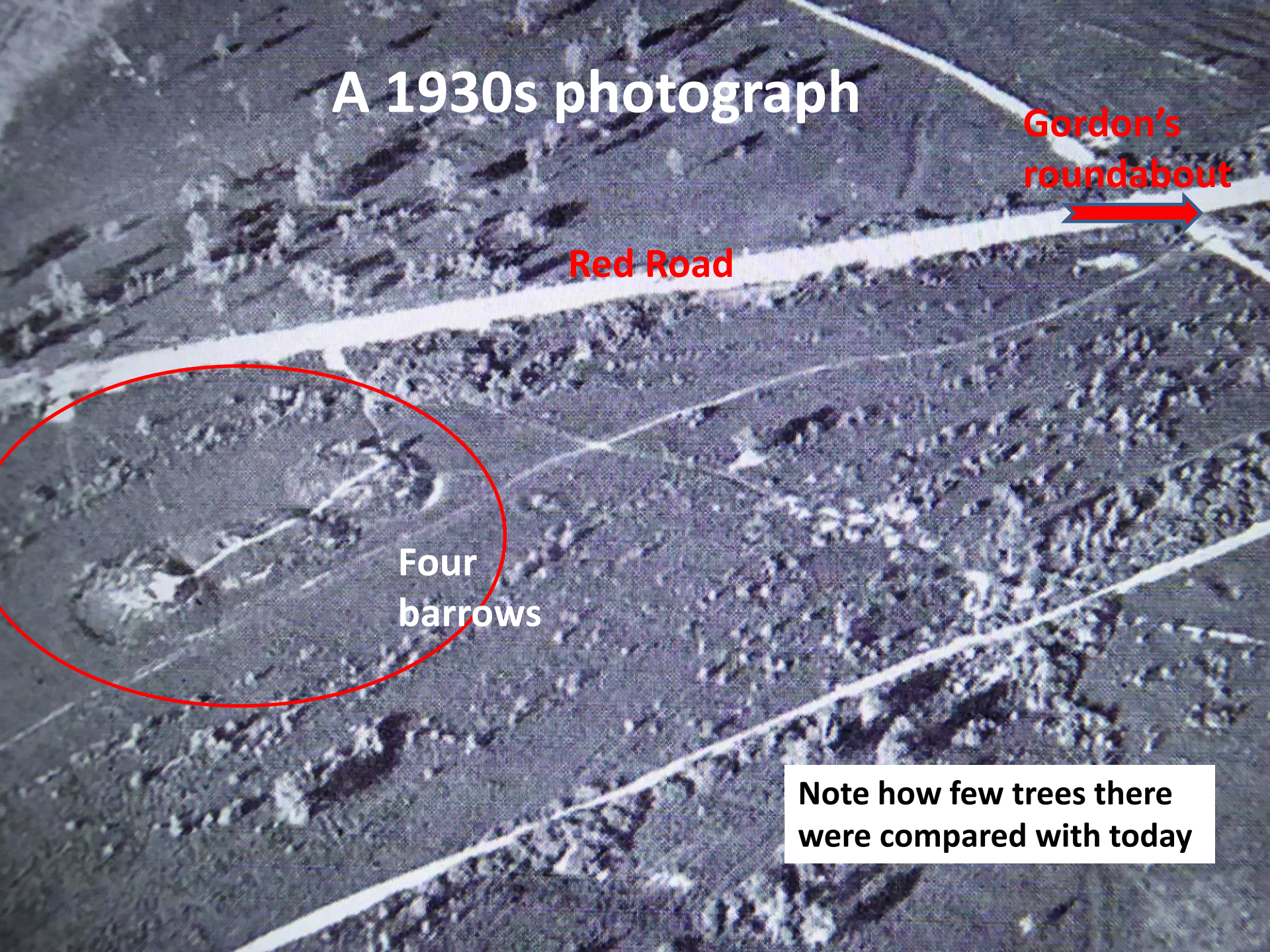
Gordon's  
roundabout



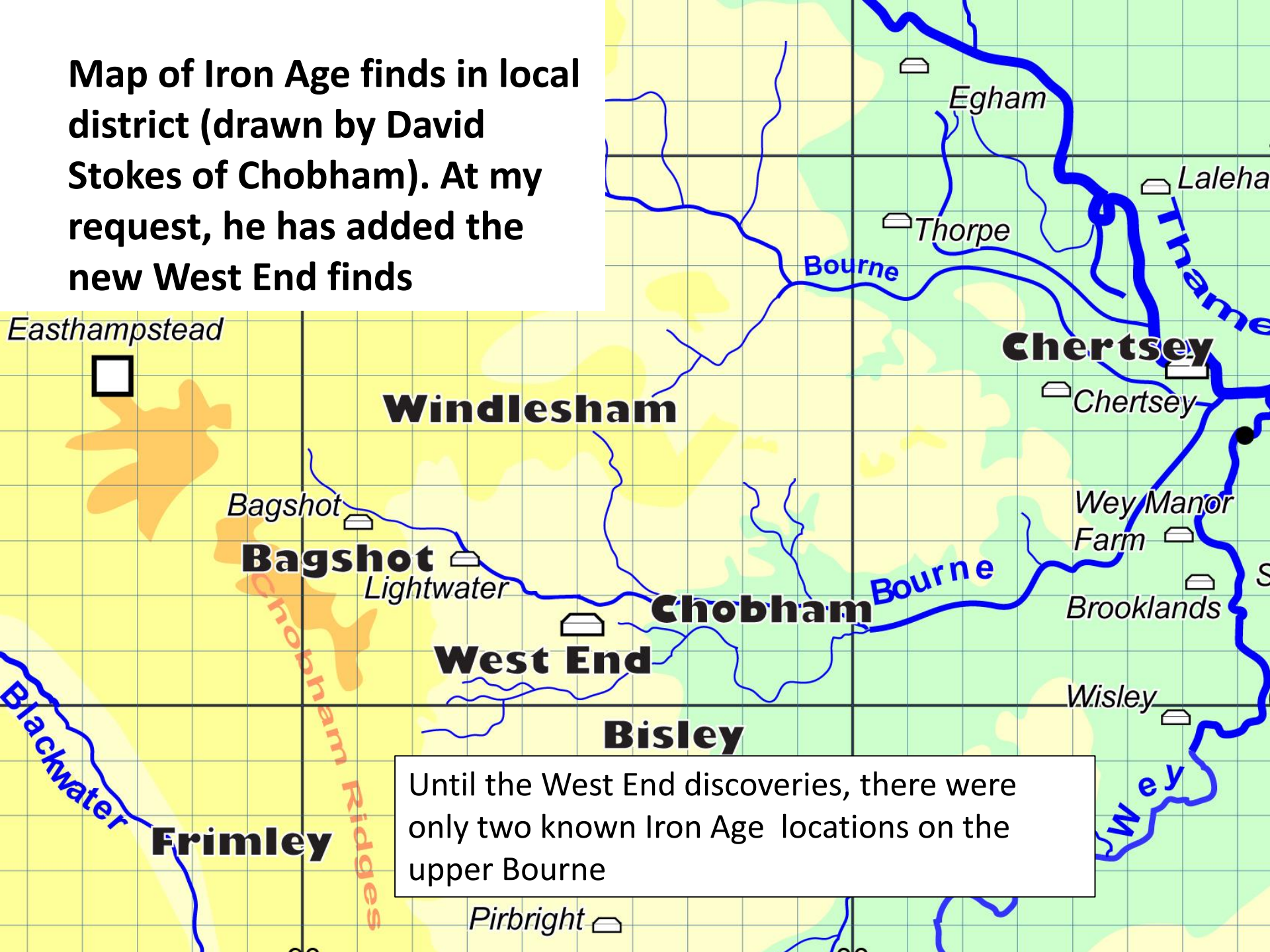
Red Road

Four  
barrows

Note how few trees there  
were compared with today



Map of Iron Age finds in local district (drawn by David Stokes of Chobham). At my request, he has added the new West End finds



Until the West End discoveries, there were only two known Iron Age locations on the upper Bourne

# Iron Age finds nearby



## Lightwater/Windlesham:

Iron spear head (above) & a well;

Lining of smelting hearth; iron slag; pots

## Bagshot:

Lining of smelting hearth; iron slag; pots

# The West End excavations

July & August 2017



I took a series of photographs recording the progress of the excavations, while talking to the archaeologists

**Beginning of main  
excavation – starting to  
remove modern topsoil to  
reveal Iron Age level.  
Viewed from Fairfield Lane**



Fencing to protect tree roots from heavy  
construction machinery



**Days later: wider area of topsoil scraped away, down to Iron Age level**



Holy Trinity School



Houses in  
Benner Lane



Final area scraped to Iron Age level



Fairfield Lane, beyond fence

Circular traces of an Iron Age roundhouse

Pattern of post holes  
interpreted as Iron Age  
granary store

Prehistoric ditch  
intersected by  
modern (200 year  
old?) ditch



The circular ditch which shows where the Iron Age roundhouse stood would have been created partly by rainwater falling off the circular roof and gouging a trench.

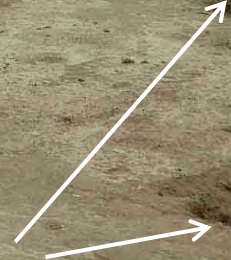
In addition it was deepened by the occupants; archaeological excavation discovered it had been dug to a depth of around one foot, to hold heavy rainfall while it gradually sank into the ground – to protect the house from flooding.

## A closer look at the roundhouse

Evidence of iron working  
found in pits near here



Part of circular ditch  
excavated; modern rain  
partially refilling it



Post holes of building,  
interpreted as granary store

Moving closer still to roundhouse

Section of trench awaiting excavation. Iron Age pottery later found here

White labels help record location of all finds, so each item can be related to everything else



**Digging roundhouse trench**

Just about to dig up  
some Iron Age pottery

Ancient soil from trenches  
and pits is put into white  
boxes, for analysis in lab –  
looking for evidence of crops  
grown, food eaten, natural  
vegetation, and evidence for  
dating the finds

Post holes of granary store



After taking the previous photo I asked Joe, the supervising archaeologist, if I could see some of the Iron Age pottery. His colleague in the photo called out “I’ve just dug up some good pieces here!”. Joe washed it in a puddle and handed it to me. It was surreal and exciting to hold something manmade no-one had seen for 2,500 years till now. That is the magic of archaeology!

It was several fragments of a pot.

Joe held it while I took photographs.



Base designed to enable pot to stand upright on a table







Fragile! This  
piece began  
to fracture as  
Joe held it

The pottery found in West End was Burnished Blackware, the most common type of Iron Age pottery. It is burnished (polished) to make the surface smooth and shiny.

Here is a set of such pots, of different shapes and purposes, excavated in Dorset.





↑  
Holy Trinity school

# The second roundhouse

Pits in interior of roundhouse

Several white labels indicate  
several finds of interest





**South-east section of trench  
of second roundhouse**

Recent rain has silted up the much  
deeper trench that was excavated



An ancient ditch – possibly a Celtic field boundary

# Main excavation area: see next slide for close-up plan

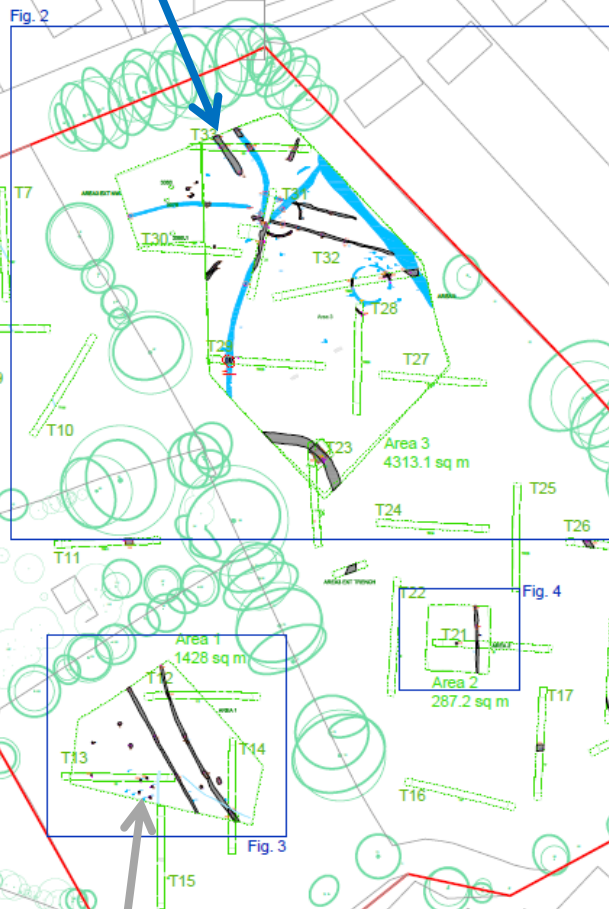


Bronze/Iron Age pottery

Exploratory trenches dug across whole site

Roman & medieval pottery & artifacts

Holy Trinity School



- ▬ site boundary
- ▬ proposed evaluation trench
- ▬ evaluation trench/excavation area
- ▬ excavated intervention
- ▬ burial
- ▬ cut feature
- ▬ deposit/fill
- ▬ field drain
- ▬ furrow
- ▬ natural (incl. topsoil/subsoil/geological/bioturbation)
- ▬ modern
- ▬ rapid preex
- ▬ structure
- ▬ surface
- ▬ treethrow
- ▬ timber
- ▬ constraint
- ⊗ section location



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 Client: 01302 771032  
 Designer: 01302 829185  
 Website: 01302 829185  
 www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk  
 enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk



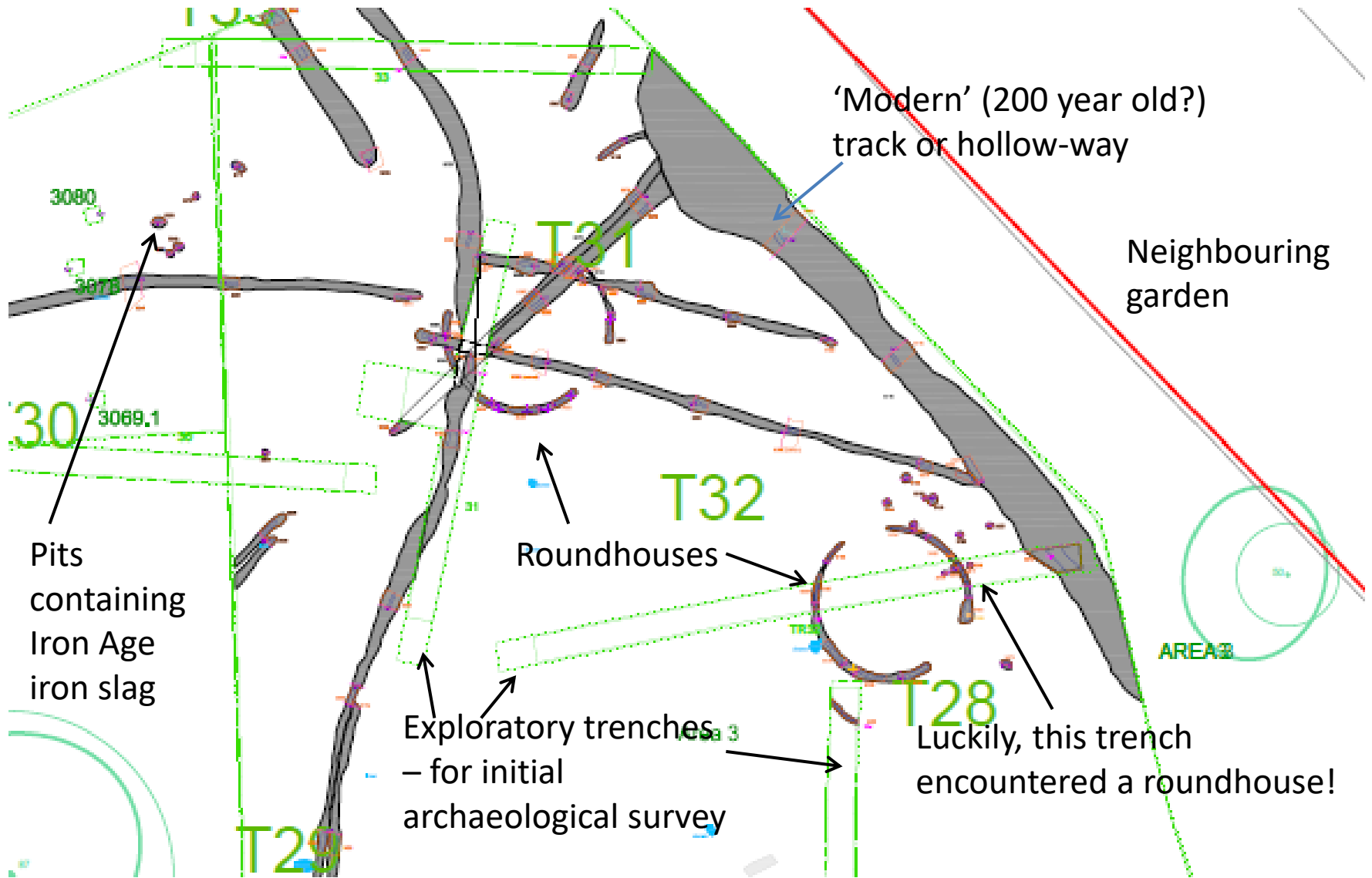
PROJECT TITLE  
**Benner Lane, West End, Woking, Surrey**

FIGURE TITLE  
**Site Plan**

DRAWN BY: LD PROJECT NO: 779619  
 CHECKED BY: RG REVISION: A  
 DATE: 11-09-2017 SCALE: A3 1:1000

FIGURE NO.  
**01**





Archaeologists interpreted some of the Iron Age ditches as field boundaries

## **Iron working at West End**

**Iron slag & heat-affected clay found in one pit**

**Slag found in other features on the site**

**Initial archaeological report:**

**“Iron working nearby - likely to be outside the area of excavation.”**

**Manufacturing suggests a group of families rather than one family?**

**Probably more roundhouses beyond excavated area**

**What might the Iron Age  
settlement have looked like?**

# Recreation of an Iron Age farm, at Butser, near Petersfield, Hampshire



Roundhouses clustered together

Open to the public – well worth visiting

# Butser Iron Age farm



Typically, a fire was kept alight inside the roundhouses 24/7, for warmth, light and cooking. Smoke seeped up through the thatched roof – there were no chimneys.

# Artist's impression – cramming a lot in!

Iron pot

Stone tools – old technology coexisted with new

Roundhouses

Typical clothes



# Crops and animals

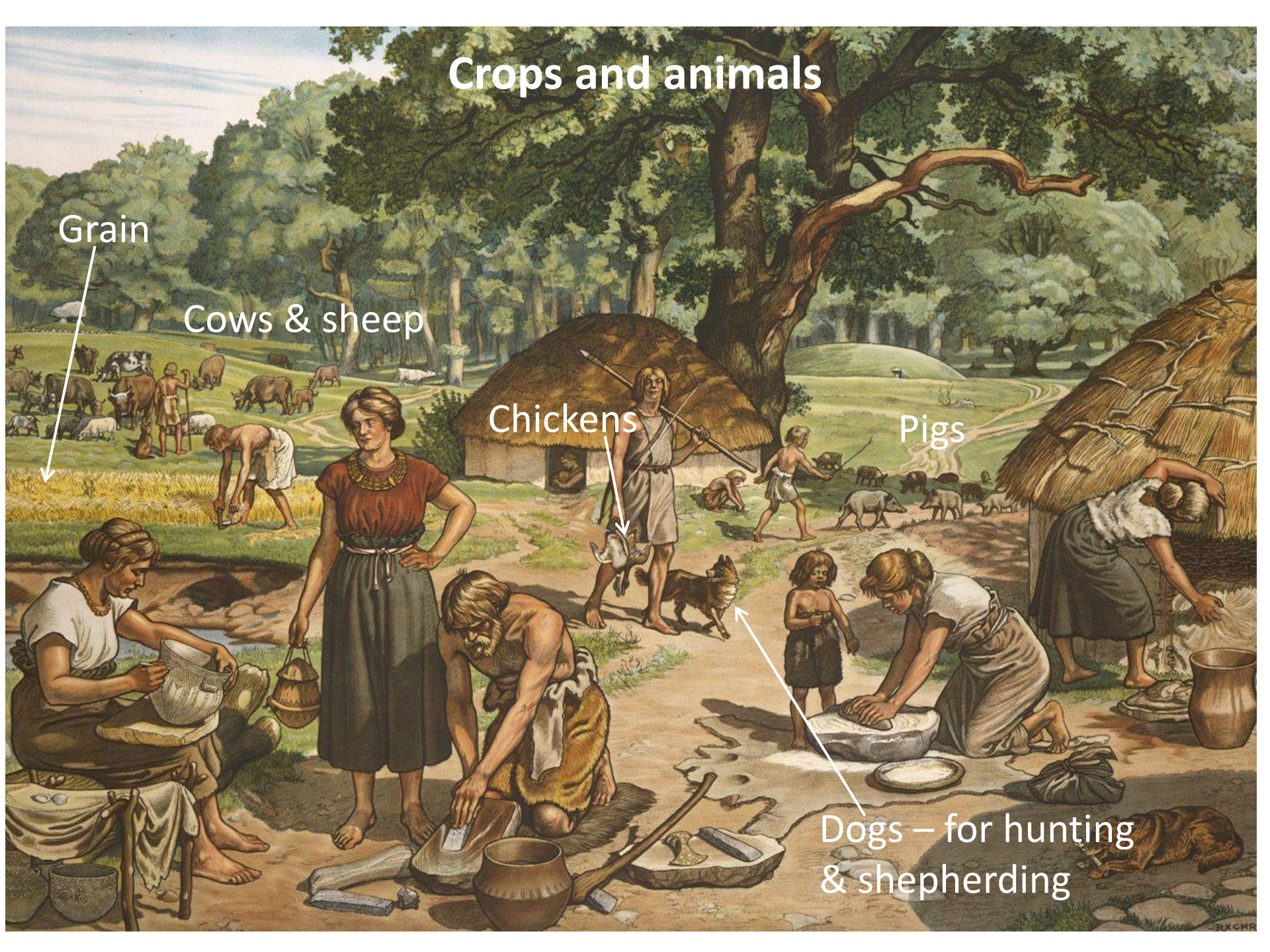
Grain

Cows & sheep

Chickens

Pigs

Dogs – for hunting & shepherding

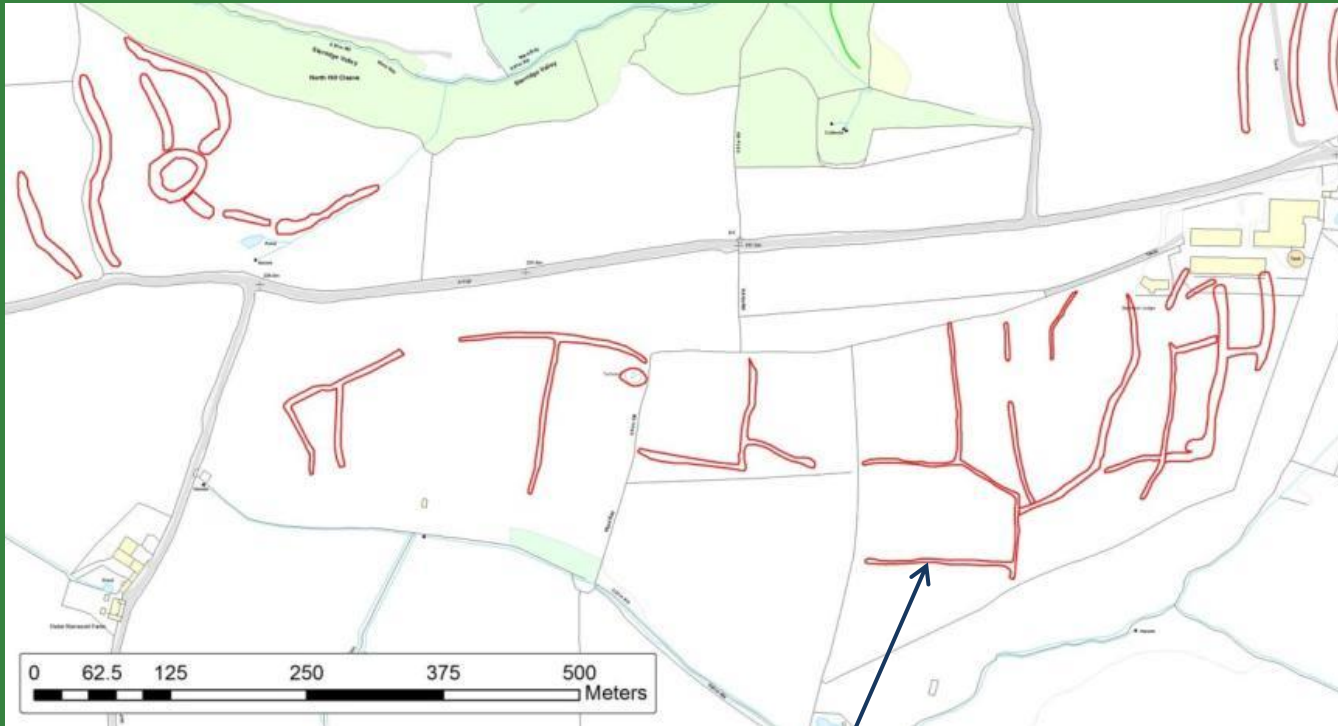


# What did Iron Age field systems look like?

What might the West End landscape have looked like?



# Iron Age field system, Ilfracombe, Devon



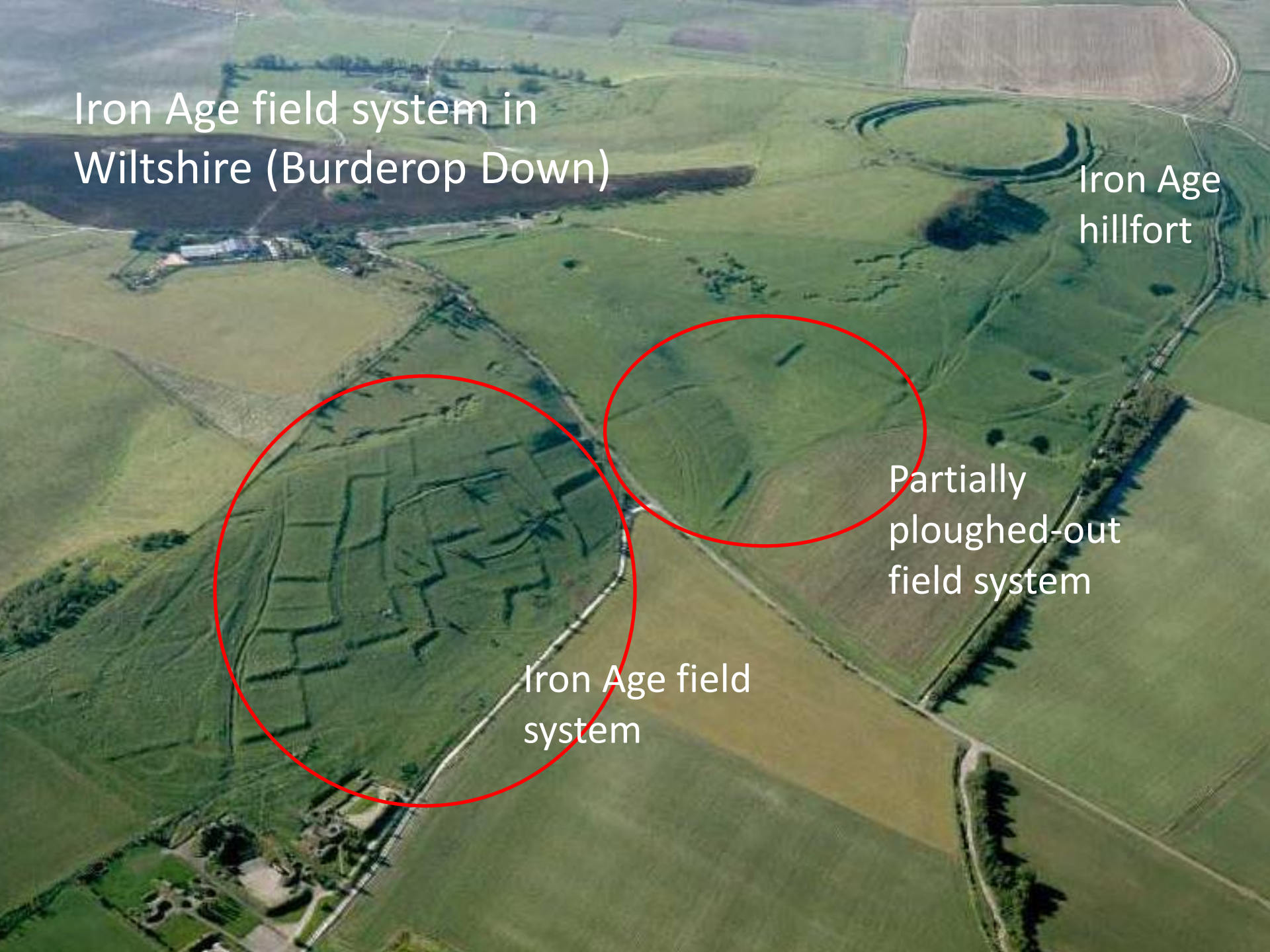
Ditches and banks define small fields of roughly rectangular shape, but reflecting contours of the land

Iron Age field system in  
Wiltshire (Burderop Down)

Iron Age  
hillfort

Partially  
ploughed-out  
field system

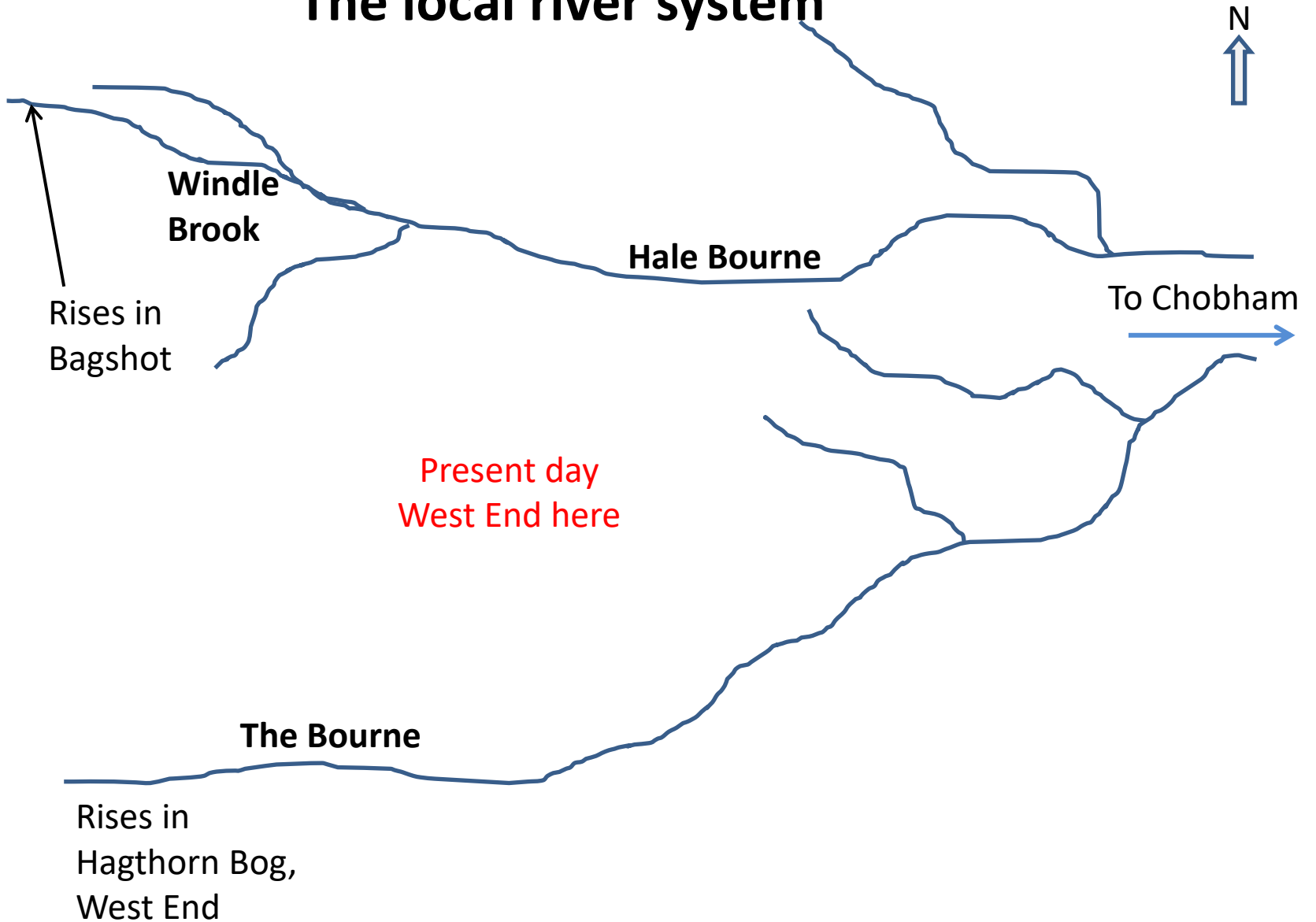
Iron Age field  
system



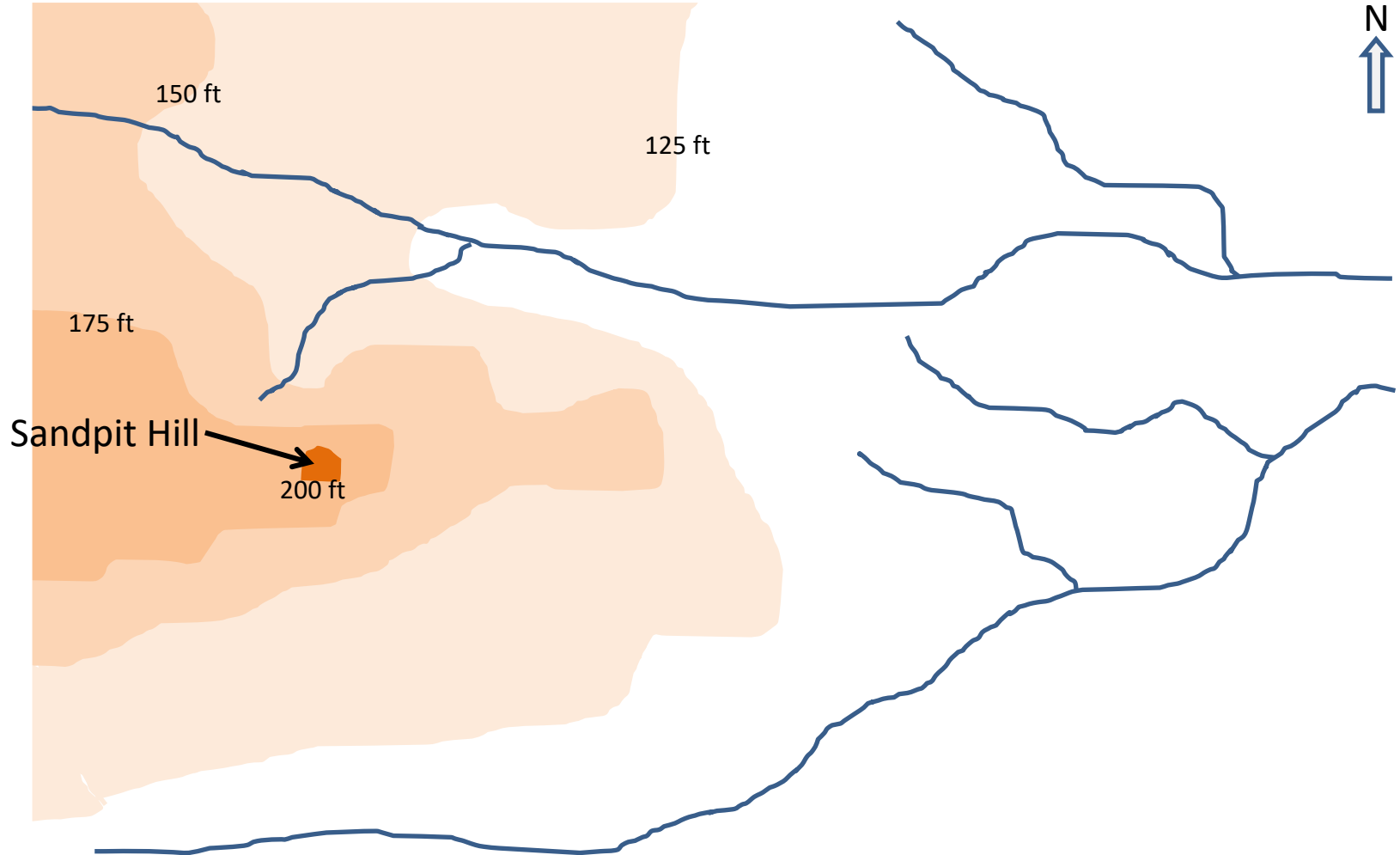
# Why was the settlement located where it was?

I have sketched some maps to suggest why

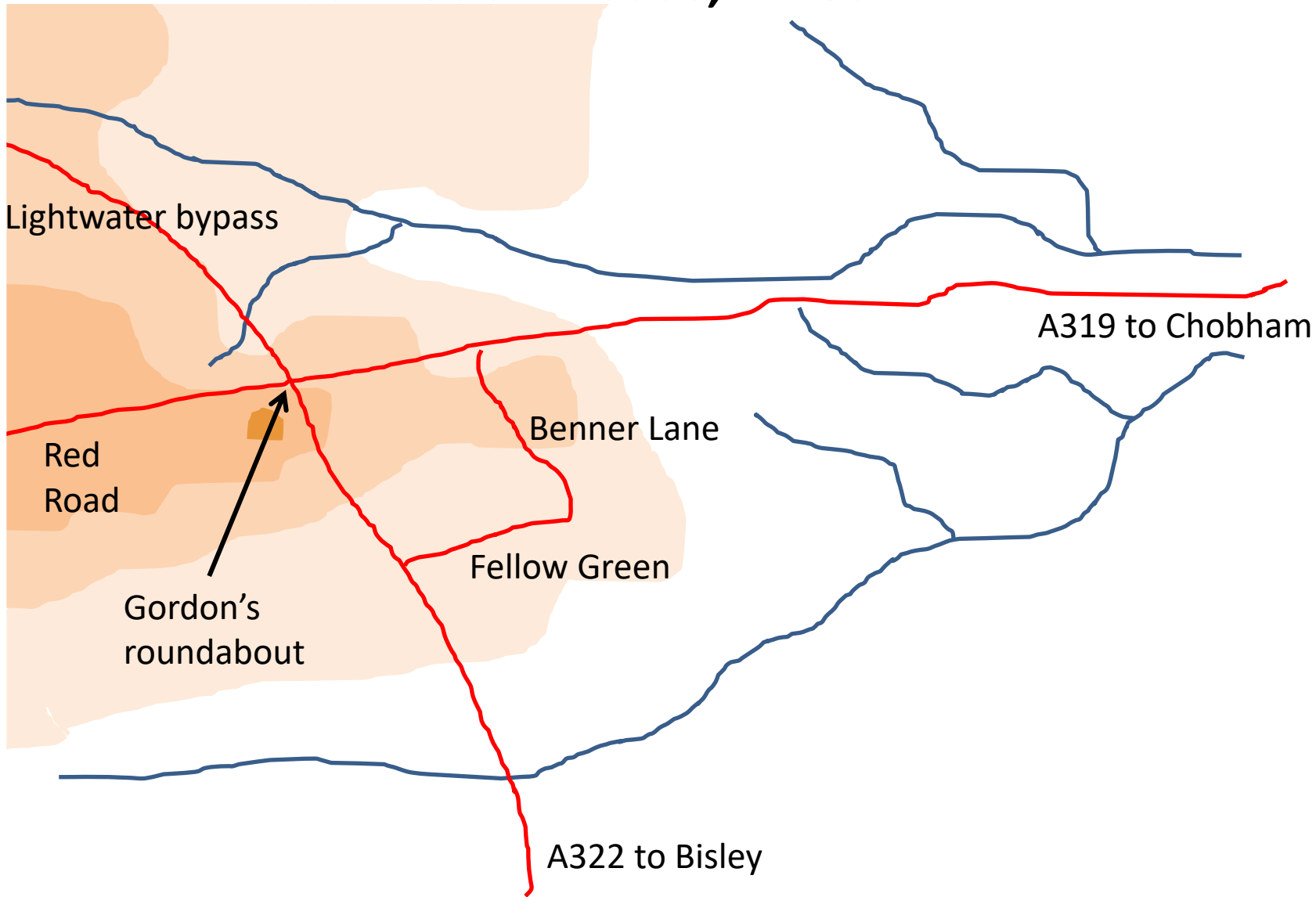
# The local river system



# Add the contours of the land



# Add modern roads, in red



Lightwater bypass

A319 to Chobham

Red Road

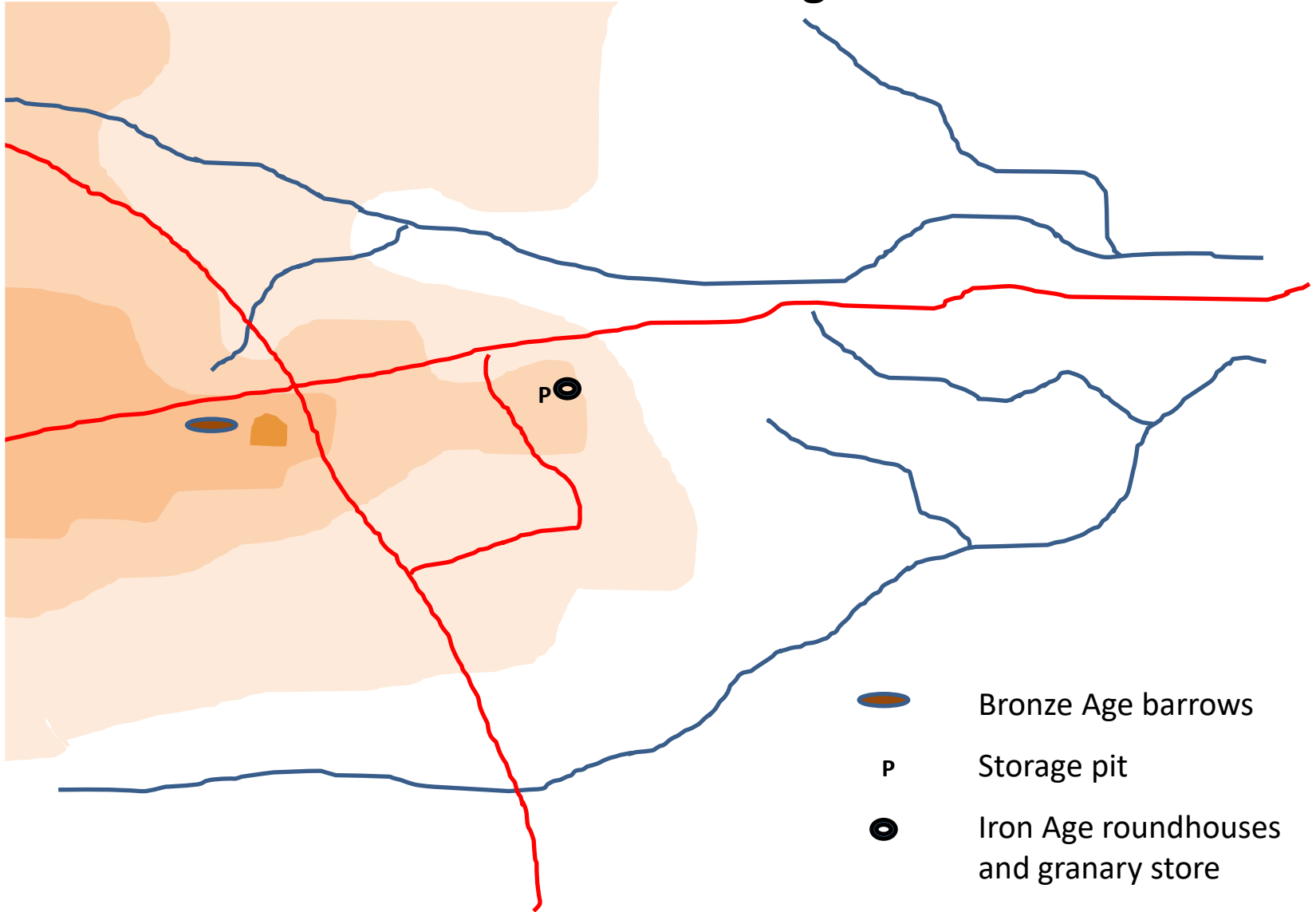
Benner Lane

Gordon's roundabout

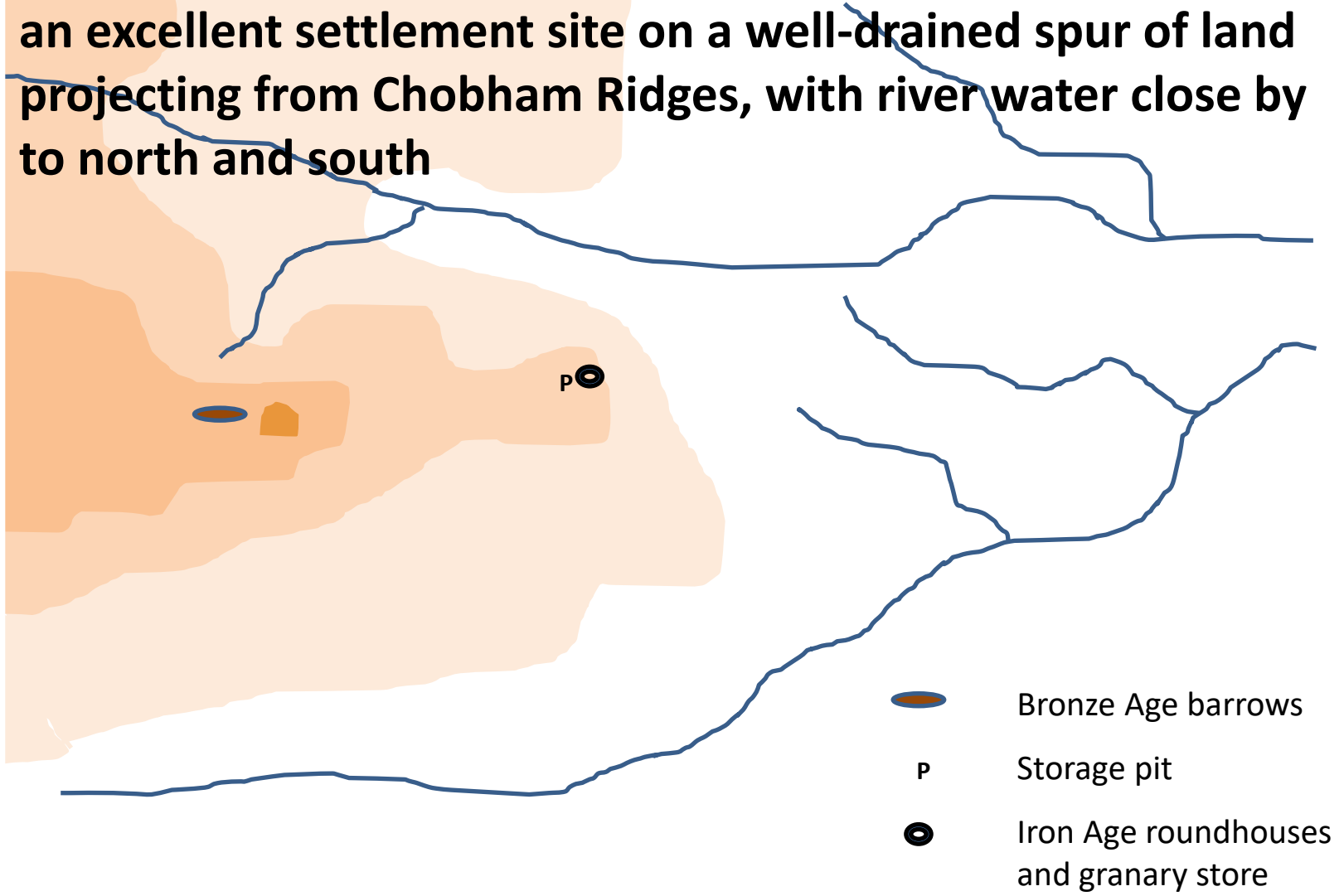
Fellow Green

A322 to Bisley

# Add the Bronze & Iron Age locations



**Remove the modern roads: what prehistoric people saw – an excellent settlement site on a well-drained spur of land projecting from Chobham Ridges, with river water close by to north and south**





**How extensive might the  
settlement have been?**

(Here come my most speculative suggestions!)

There is a strong possibility that the excavated site caught the edge of a larger settlement (an idea reinforced by the presence of iron smelting). Several archaeologists I've consulted agree.

Further roundhouses (if any) could well be north and east of the two found, because

- (a) no houses found close by to the south or west,
- (b) the highest point of the land is a few hundred yards to the north, and settlements were often located on or around the highest ground

There was probably a considerable field system, for growing crops and keeping animals.

The excavation found traces of a field system.

There is a fairly level plateau in the Fairfield Lane/Benner Lane area, and fields would probably be located there... and maybe much more widely.

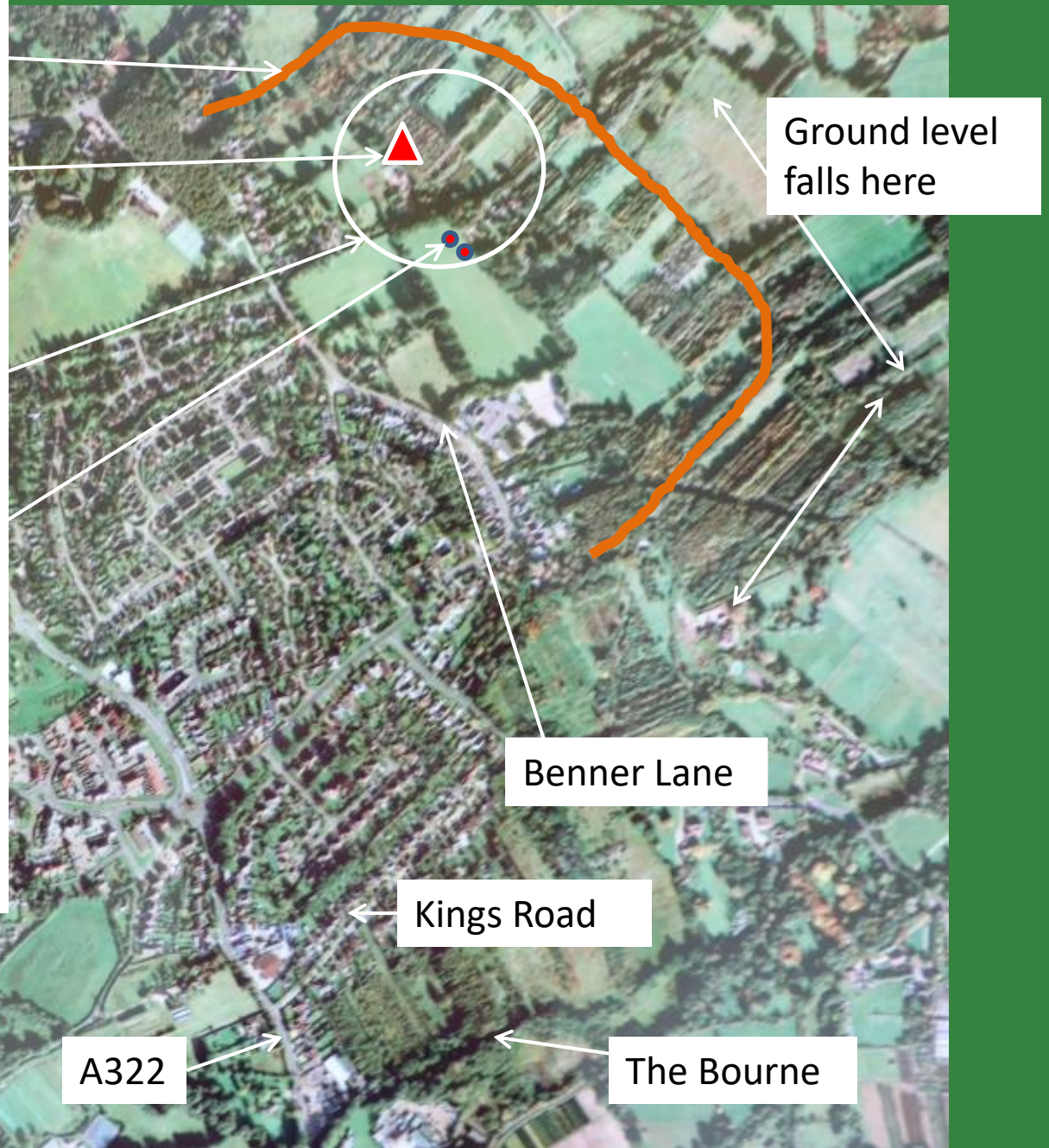
Edge of plateau of fairly level land (orange line)

Highest point on plateau (triangle)

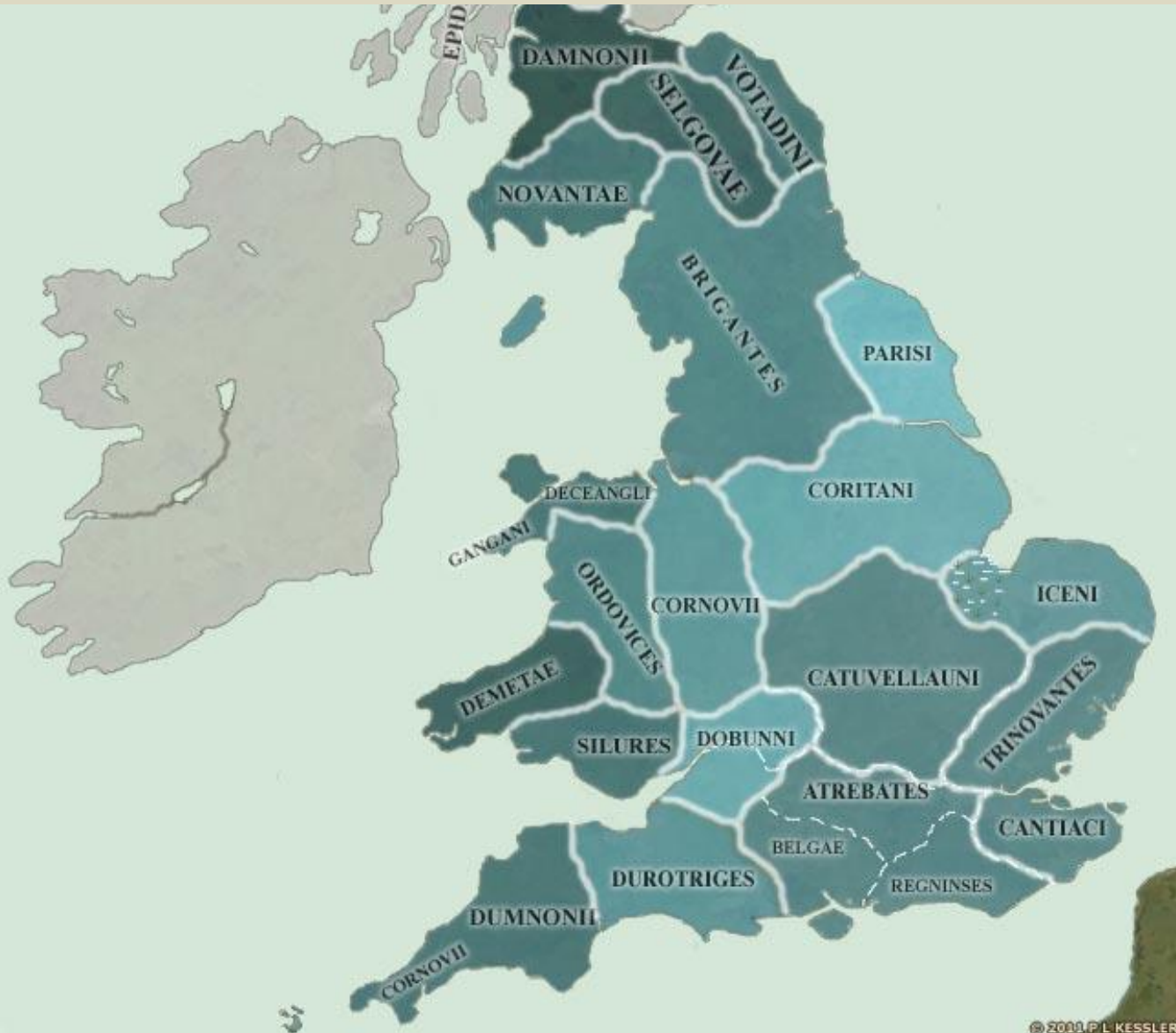
Most likely area for other roundhouses (if any) – within circle

Excavated roundhouses

Celtic field system most likely on plateau near the houses, but could also have been extensive in other parts of present-day West End



# The local Celtic tribe in our area was the Atrebates



**West End is a story of continuous  
occupation for 5,000 years**

**Bronze Age**

**Iron Age**

**Roman**

**Medieval**

**Modern**