



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Investigate: WEST KENNET LONG BARROW



An aerial view of West Kennet Long Barrow

① Long barrows are ancient tombs. First a wood or stone 'house' was built for the dead, then covered with a long mound of earth, or chalk and earth. West Kennet Long Barrow was built sometime around 3,650BC.

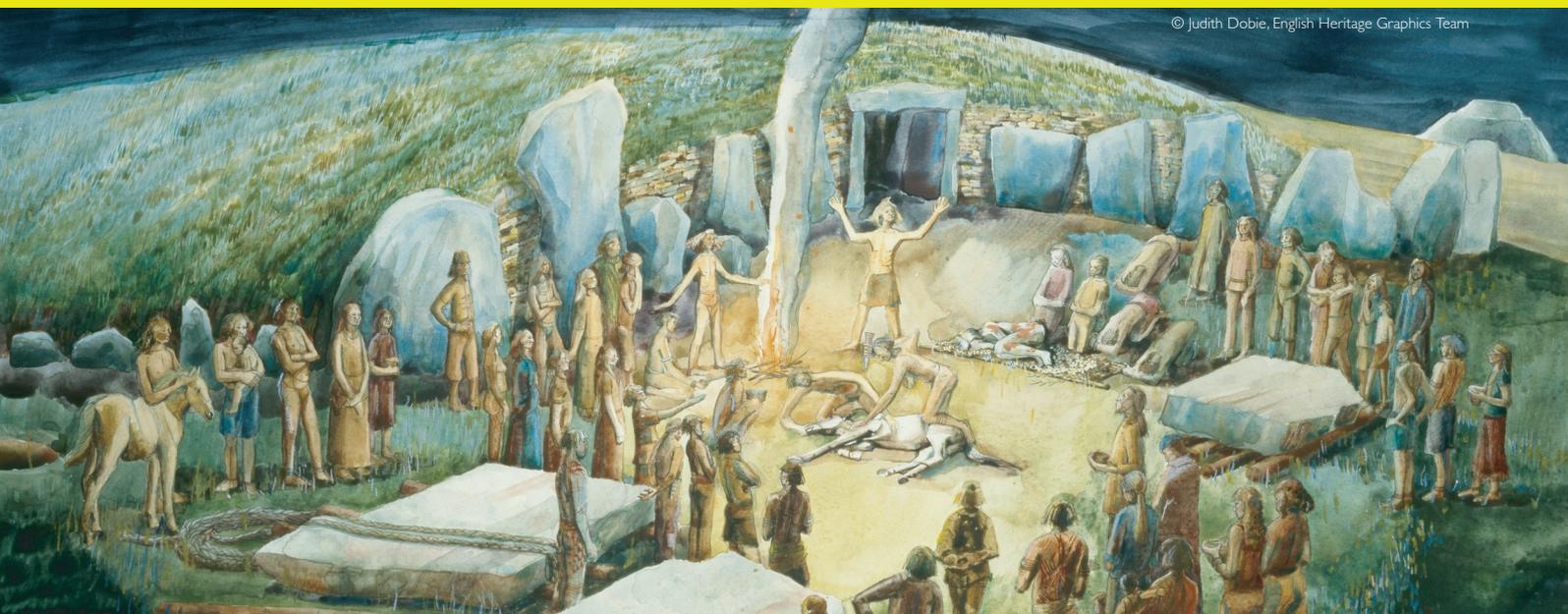
How long ago is that?

② Over a period of about 30 years at least 36 people were placed in the different chambers or 'rooms' of the stone tomb. After that it was closed up. People visited the Long Barrow time and again for over a thousand years. Sometimes the top of the tomb was opened and other bones placed inside.

What sort of things do you think people did when they visited?

(Clue: archaeologists found traces of fires, animal bones, flint tools, beads and pottery just outside the entrance.)

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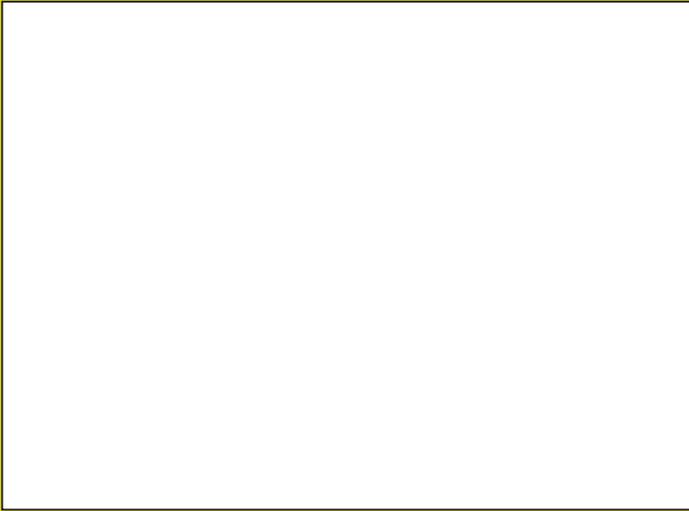
③ Before you go inside, look for:

- the materials that were used to build the Long Barrow - sarsen stones, limestone, chalk, pieces of flint;
- the remains of the original ditches on either side of the mound.

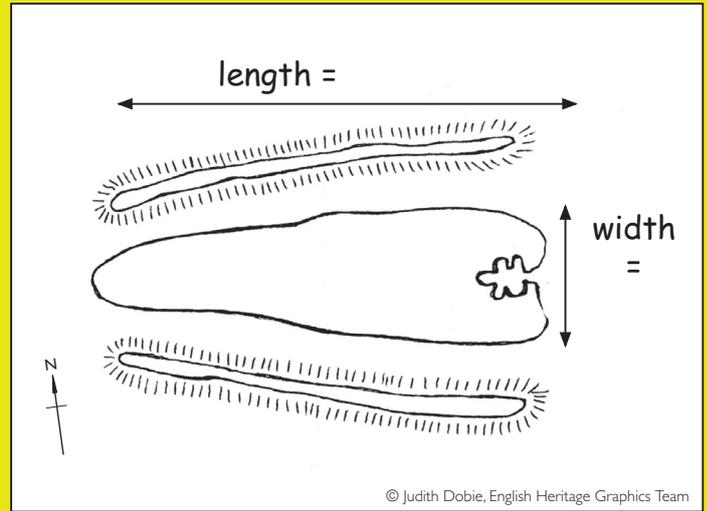
The big sarsen stones were brought across the downs. The smaller stones came from 32 kilometres (20 miles) away.

How do you think the sarsens were transported? What about the smaller stones?

④ Draw your own sketch of West Kennet Long Barrow.



⑤ Can you estimate the length and width of the whole Long Barrow?



⑥ You can see Silbury Hill from here.

Would you have been able to see it when the Long Barrow was being built?

(Clue: Silbury Hill was begun around 2400BC)

⑦ Find the huge sarsen stone in the burial chamber on the left. It has a smooth groove. Archaeologists think it was made by polishing stone tools.

What do you think?

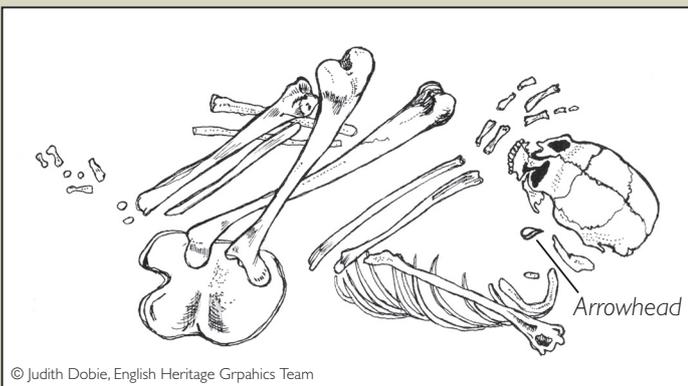


Polished Axe head

⑧ Inside the Long Barrow

Archaeologists call this a chambered long barrow. Inside there are 5 different sections where the bones of about 36 people were carefully placed. There was only one complete skeleton, all the rest had been moved around. There was a flint arrowhead with the skeleton, and he had a broken arm.

What do you think had happened to him?



Your answer:

⑨ The West Kennet Long Barrow has survived for more than 5,500 years.

What do you think is the greatest threat to it now?

What can we do to preserve it for the future?