

## **Further excavations at the Long Man, Wilmington.**

### ***Introduction***

Following our excavation at the foot of the Long Man in 2002 (Bell and Butler 2003), Members of Sussex Archaeological Society, under the direction of Chris Butler and a team from Reading University with Prof. Martin Bell, carried out further excavation and survey work on the Long Man in 2004.

This latest fieldwork is partly as a result of the Sussex Archaeological Society needing to draw up a conservation plan. This will enable the Society to plan the future management of the Long Man monument. The concrete blocks that form the outline of the Long Man figure are currently in a state of disrepair, and given the suggestion that the feet and left leg were substantially altered during the 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration (Castleden 2002), an attempt to establish the correct position of these features was desirable before any repairs are carried out. Finally there are the controversial questions of its date, and whether it was originally a chalk-cut figure at all?

### ***Summary of the 2002 excavation***

The 2002 excavation (Bell 2004) showed that in the early Holocene the slope had been wooded. Human activity in the Neolithic and Bronze Age is indicated by pottery and flintwork. Clearance, cultivation and colluviation seem to have taken place in the Bronze Age leading to the burial of a soil surface dated by Optically Stimulated Luminescence to 1650 $\pm$ 940 BC. After this colluviation episode there was a long period of slope stability which appears to span the Iron Age to early Medieval periods. At this time few artefacts and little sediment were deposited and there is nothing to indicate that people were attracted to this particular spot.

A buried soil representing the latter part of this long period of slope stability contained fragments of Medieval pottery and some pieces of early brick, of which the mean age from four samples is 1545 $\pm$ 30 AD. This buried soil was sealed by a period of slope instability in which some larger pieces of chalk sealed the surface. Erosion of chalk and soil continued to the present day and the eroded soil contained further pieces of brick of the same type. Our provisional conclusion from this evidence was that the hill figure may have been created in the late medieval or early post-medieval period and that it might have been outlined in brick from the time of its first creation.

### ***The 2004 excavation and survey project***

The excavations and other survey work in 2004 were designed to help answer some of the outstanding questions about the Long Man. As well as the excavations, a geophysical survey of the prehistoric monuments on the top of Windover Hill (above the Long Man) was carried out, and the two fields below the figure were fieldwalked. An intervisibility survey is also currently being undertaken. Alongside this, further historical research is continuing to establish additional information about the Long Man and its landscape setting.

As the analysis of the artefacts and environmental samples and dating are ongoing, this interim report should be considered as a provisional statement on the results of the fieldwork.

A total of six trenches were excavated across parts of the hill figure outline, each located specifically to answer certain questions about its shape, construction and date. In four of these trenches (Trenches 1, 2, 5 and 6 on Fig. 1), all situated on the lower part of the figure, the chalk natural was encountered 300mm below the ground level. Although these trenches were placed directly over the outline of the figure and were designed to investigate the proposed alternative positions of the figure, no features were found cut into the chalk natural or the overlying soil. The artefacts recovered were almost entirely Post-Medieval in date, and were mostly fragments of brick from the various brick outlines recorded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and from the suggested 16<sup>th</sup> century brick outline. However, no bricks from any date were found *in-situ* in these trenches.

Trench 3, situated on the head of the figure (Fig. 1), located a U-shaped feature below the existing concrete block outline. This feature was cut through the overlying soil and only slightly cut into the natural chalk; it was filled with chalk rubble, and sitting in the top of the fill were two red bricks from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century repair. Below these bricks was a single yellow brick from the 1873-4 re-lining. Although this cut appears to pre-date the 19<sup>th</sup> century brick outline, our initial impression is that it is a fairly recent feature, and may be an experimental trench cut by the Rev. Dearsley in 1890. The records indicate that the experimental trench was a failure and that the bricks that formed the outline were reinstated (pers. com. Rodney Castleden).

Trench 4 was situated above the right staff to see if the staff had extended further up-slope and turned into a crook, as suggested by the geophysics carried out by Castleden (2002). The trench did locate a shallow feature in the expected position, but a provisional interpretation, based on the small beach pebbles and mortar found in it, is that it is a 19<sup>th</sup> century feature. The most interesting aspect of this trench, especially given its position high up towards the top of the slope, is the 0.5m of colluvium encountered. This deep deposit had a number of horizons which we have provisionally interpreted as ancient land surfaces, and also contained numerous prehistoric worked flints and a single sherd of prehistoric pottery.

The geophysics survey on Windover Hill provided some interesting information relating to the known monuments, but no indications of anything not currently visible as an upstanding earthwork today. The fieldwalking produced some interesting results, with very little prehistoric material recovered, and no Roman artefacts. The majority of the finds appear to date from the later Medieval and Post Medieval periods, which ties in with the proposed date for the Long Man.

### ***Summary***

What can we provisionally conclude from our findings?

The excavation produced no evidence for any alternative position of legs or feet, although if the figure was only marked with bricks and there was no deep cut into the ground, then it is unlikely that this could have been determined in the excavation.

Analysis of the distribution of the different types of brick in the soil may help to determine this. We conclude from these observations that there is no evidence that the figure was ever cut down to solid chalk. Nor are there clear indications of chalk-filled trenches such as those that mark the outlines of the Uffington (Miles *et al* 2004) and Cerne Abbas (Darvill *et al* 1999) hill figures.

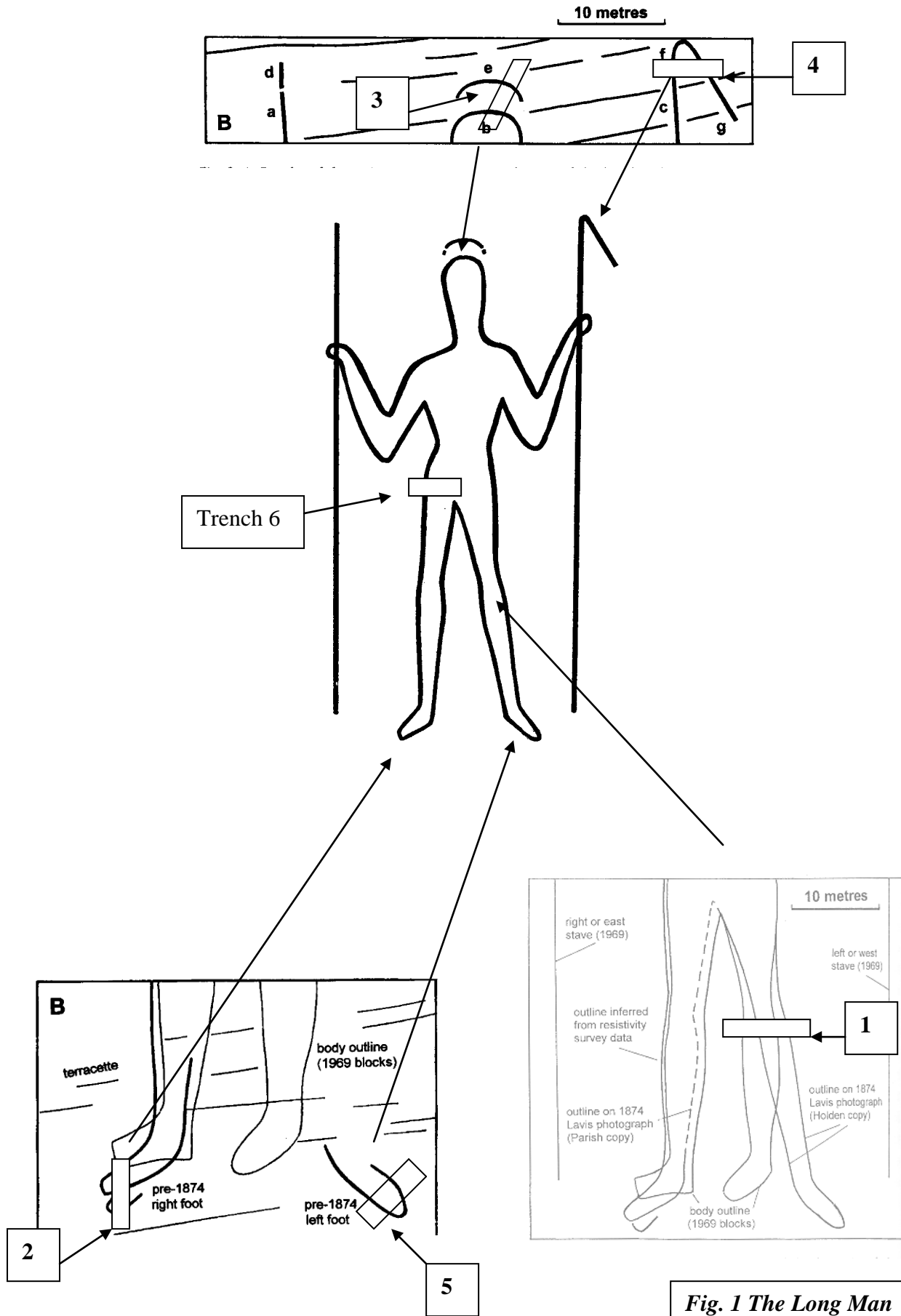
The superficial nature of the hill figure itself and the main concentration of artefacts equally superficially at the base of the organic soil layer, together with the accumulating evidence for an early brick outline, strengthen the tentative results from the 2002 excavation, which suggest that the figure may be of early Post Medieval date. Nothing was found to contradict our provisionally suggested date of the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century for the first brick outline of the figure.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who helped with the fieldwork, and Folkington Estate and Mr Ray Ellis, the farmer, for permission to carry out the fieldwalking and geophysical surveys. We would also like to thank Sussex Archaeological Society, English Heritage and English Nature for their permissions and assistance with the project.

Chris Butler and Martin Bell.

### ***References***

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**Fig. 1 The Long Man**