

The Archaeology of the South Dorset Ridgeway

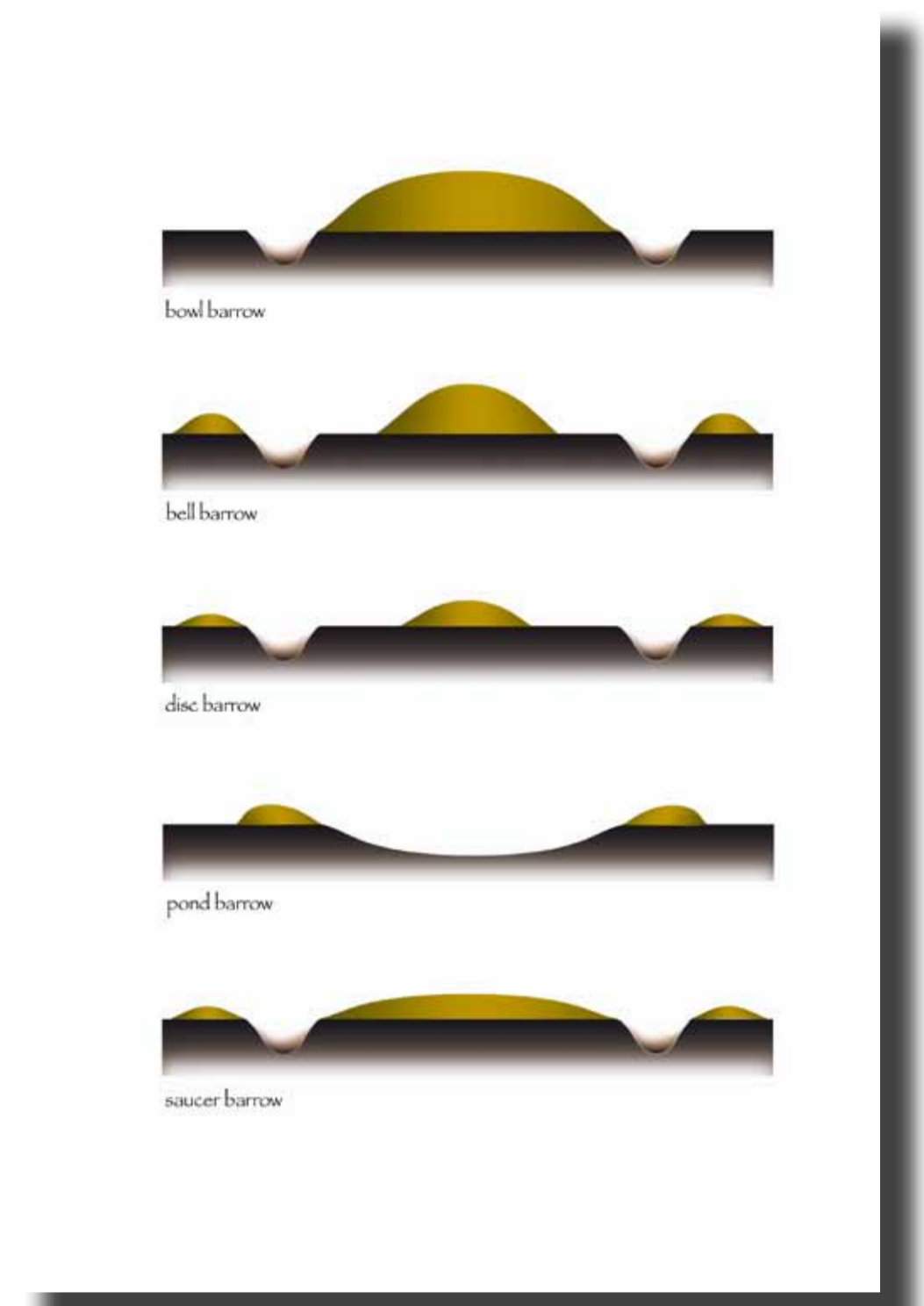
More than just lumps and bumps

The South Dorset Ridgeway reveals how a landscape can be shaped by the people who have lived there over a very long period of time.

The area is characterised by both large and small earthen mounds and stone monuments. The earliest of these was built over six thousand years ago, but there is evidence of much earlier movements of people across the Ridgeway.



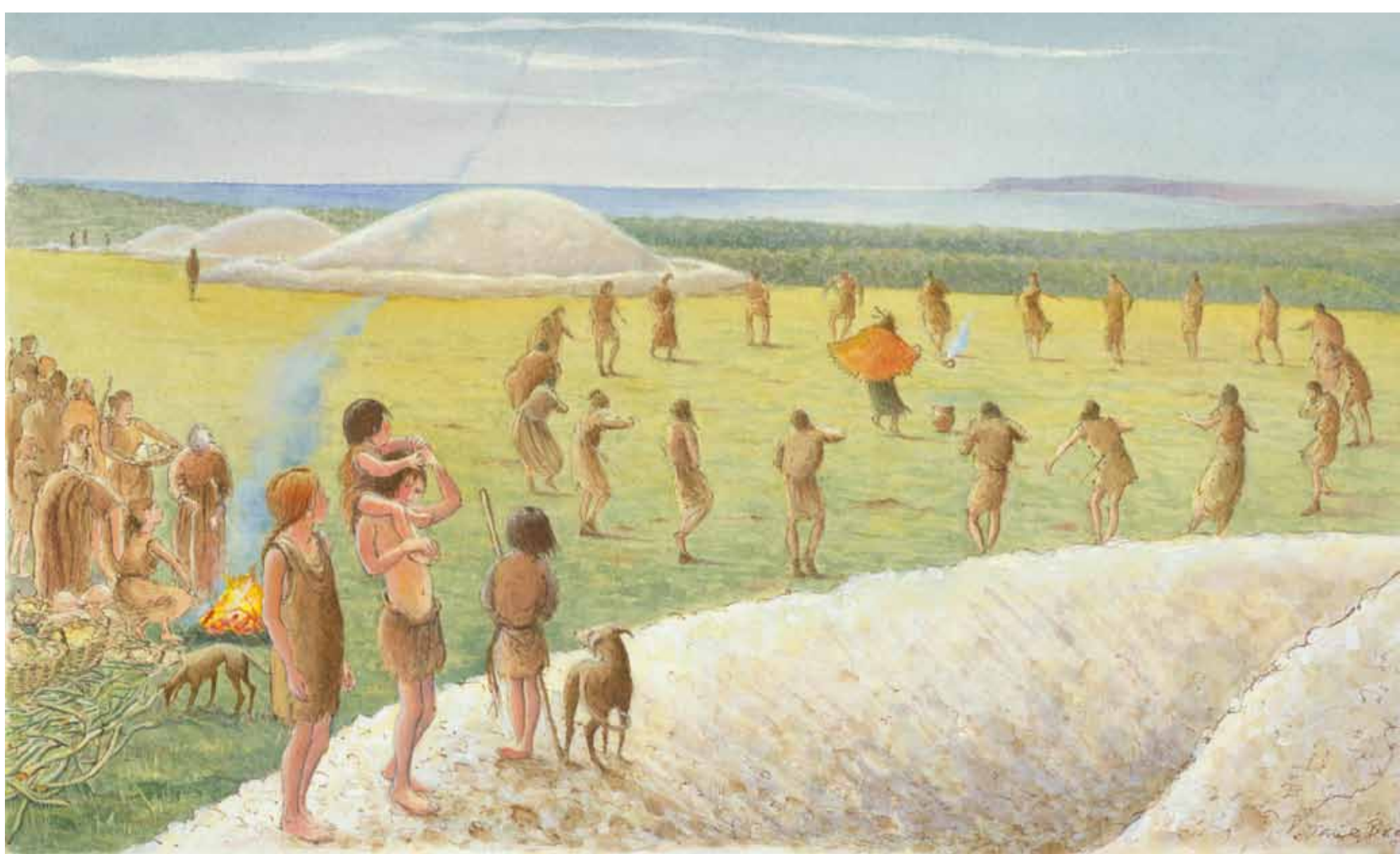
Snowy Barrows on the Ridgeway
Photograph by Sue Macpherson ARPS



Shapes of the round barrows found along the South Dorset Ridgeway ©Yvonne Lee

Between 2500 and 2000 BC during the Late Neolithic and into the Bronze Age the building of monuments was focussed either on burial mounds along the top of the ridge or towards the River Frome where substantial circular timber henge monuments were built. These would become focal points for the surrounding groups of people well into the next millennium. In the Iron Age (600 BC to AD 43) the focus of activity stayed in this lower lying landscape, with the adaptation of Maiden Castle into an enormous hillfort.

Many of these historic sites can be seen and visited today.



Burial ceremony on Bincombe Hill, drawn by Jane Brayne © Dorset AONB



Barrows on Bronkham Hill Photograph by Sue Mitchell