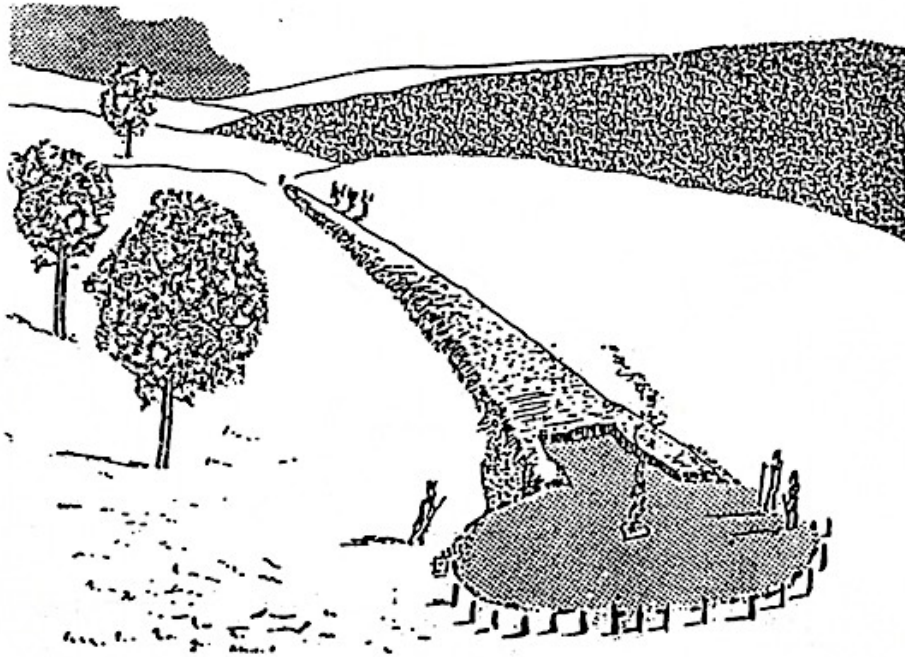


CRICKLEY HILL 1985: The Latest News

This year we are working at the far western end of the hill, in an area which was used from about 2700 BC for worship. Our excavations last season showed that this flat plateau was used (perhaps about 2000 or 1500 BC) for rituals which involved burning animal sacrifices within a small stone circle.

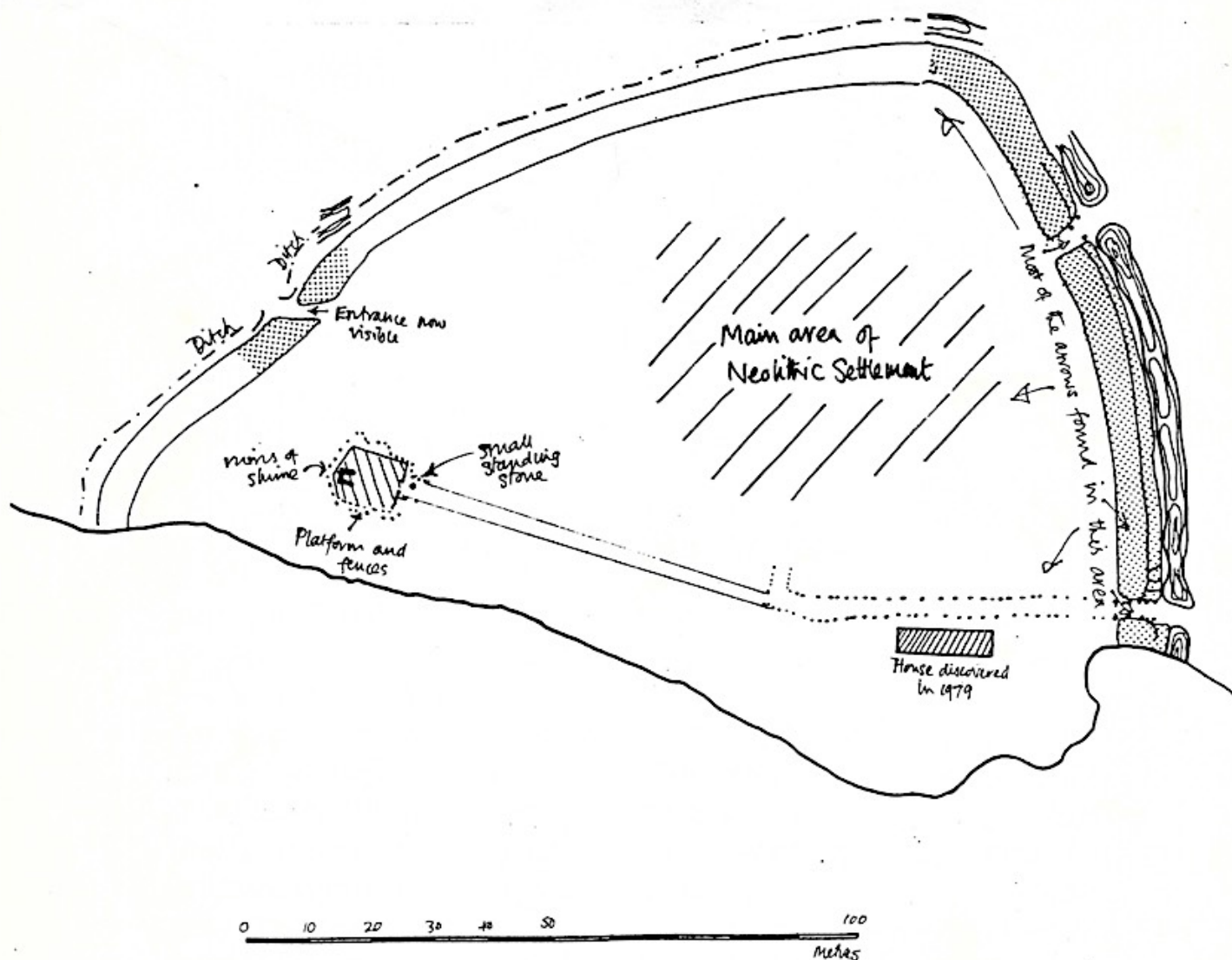


Reconstruction drawing of mound and circle as we found them in 1984.

This year we have gone deeper in the same area and have found that about 2700 BC the people of the Neolithic settlement had built a cobbled stone platform surrounded by low fences. It was approached along a fenced narrow road, and just before the worshipper reached the platform a small upright stone in the centre of the road barred his way. Wear marks on the road surface show that people then veered around this stone to arrive on the platform through a narrow entrance. The platform itself was kept scrupulously clean. In narrow stone cairns projecting from its edges we found bone, antler, flint and broken pottery, apparently deliberately laid there while the platform was in use. At the far western end of the platform stood a tiny wooden building, a shrine about the size of one of our site huts. It was three-sided, and its open end faced the roadway and the surface of the platform.

What sort of rites were practiced on the top of this hill nearly 5000 years ago we have no way of knowing: the fences and narrow road kept the place secluded from the life in the village on the top of the hill.

Nearby, we have found a section of the strong defences which encircled the hill at this period. You can see the ditch, and the ruins of the walls on either side of the entrance, which shows, by the dark red staining on the rock, that it too was burnt during the attack which ended in the destruction of the Neolithic village some 4500 years ago.



PHD 15