

The Longstone at Mottistone Isle of Wight.

Coordinates

Latitude: 50.6563 / 50°39'22"N = Longitude: -1.4255 / 1°25'31"W
OS Eastings: 440704.777869 = OS Northings: 84224.903309 = OS Grid: SZ407842
Mapcode National: GBR 79F.LG6 = Mapcode Global: FRA 77XB.LGS

Entry Name: The Longstone: a long barrow 60m south of Longstone Cottage
Scheduled Date: 9 October 1981
Last Amended: 31 January 1992
Source: Historic England
Source ID: 1010417
English Heritage Legacy ID: 12307
County: Isle of Wight
Civil Parish: Brighstone
Traditional County: Hampshire
Lieutenancy Area (Ceremonial County): Isle of Wight
Church of England Parish: Mottistone St Peter and St Paul
Church of England Diocese: Portsmouth

Legend has it that St Catherine and the Devil had a contest to see who should control the Isle of Wight. The Longstone's tall iron sandstone pillar was supposedly thrown by St Catherine from the Down to the east which bears her name.

The Devil's wager

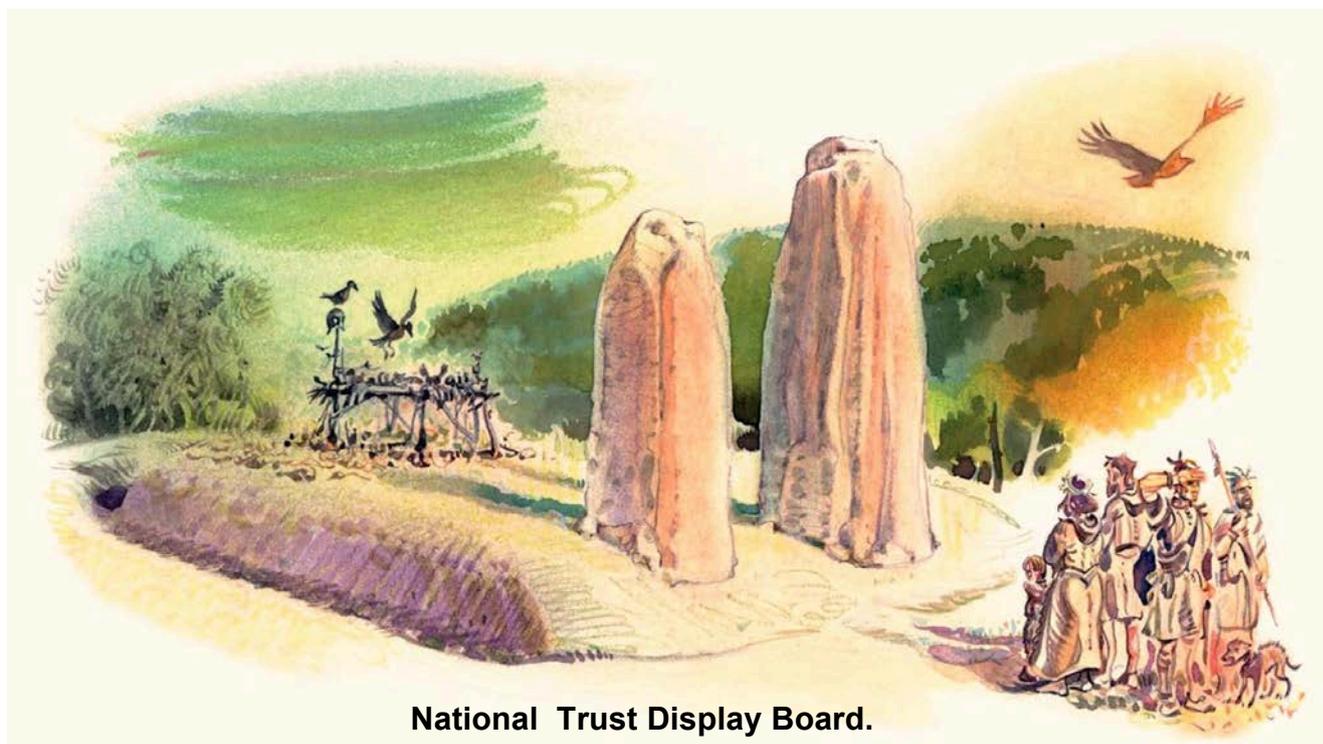
At over 4m high and 2m wide, this was a mighty feat indeed. The Devil's smaller stone (a mere 2.9m high and 1.2m wide) fell short and he lost the wager. The final resting place of the stones – St Catherine's dominating the recumbent smaller stone is said to symbolise the triumph of good over evil.

The Longstone marks the entrance to a Neolithic long barrow. It has now been shown that the stones are what remains of a 6,000-year-old Neolithic communal long barrow for burying the dead: 31m long, 9m wide and 2m high. Long barrows in this part of England that are not on chalk or limestone are rare. It is thought that bodies were laid out for birds and animals to feed, then the bones were buried in chambers and the soil heaped up into a mound. In Neolithic times the mound was likely to have been higher. People probably worshipped the sun and moon; this may be the reason why the Longstone barrow is aligned west–east.

The Longstone site is no longer as it was intended to be:

The burial mound has been damaged over the years and the stones themselves may have been moved in Saxon times. They were certainly dislodged in the 19th century by Lord Dillon, a local squire who was curious to see what lay beneath them. He unearthed nothing for his efforts

Bodies may have been laid out for burials at the Long Stone 6000 years ago



National Trust Display Board.

The Longstone site is no longer as it was intended to be

Moot Stone: a meeting place in Saxon times

Ancient burial places frequently retain their cultural and mystical significance for thousands of years. In Saxon times - 4,000 years after the Neolithic long barrow was built - the Longstone is thought to have been used as a meeting place where judicial and administrative affairs were carried out.

'Moot' is Saxon for meeting place, and it is possible that the name of the village – Mottistone – is a corruption of 'moot stone'.

People still celebrate the solstices and equinoxes at the Longstone to this day.

The monument includes a long barrow set on the crest of a steep south facing slope within 2km of the south coast of the Isle of Wight. It survives as an earthwork orientated east-west and appears pear-shaped in plan. The barrow mound is 31m long, 9m wide and varies in height between 1m at the east end and 0.2m at the west. Two large sandstone blocks are set on the east end of the mound. The upright stone is c.4m high and too large to have formed part of a burial chamber while the recumbent stone is 3m long. Flanking the north side of the barrow mound are the traces of a ditch from which material was quarried during the construction of the monument. This survives to a width of c.3m and is 0.2m deep. The ditch S of the mound is believed to survive as a buried feature.

The site was partially excavated by Jacquetta Hawkes in 1956. Finds included a sandstone kerb revetment on the north side of the mound as well as a flint scraper and two sherds of pottery believed to be contemporary with the monument.

Reasons for Scheduling:

Long barrows were constructed as earthen or drystone mounds with flanking ditches and acted as funerary monuments during the Early and Middle Neolithic

periods (3400-2400 BC). They represent the burial places of Britain's early farming communities and, as such, are amongst the oldest field monuments surviving visibly in the present landscape. Where investigated, long barrows appear to have been used for communal burial, often with only parts of the human remains having been selected for interment. Certain sites provide evidence for several phases of funerary monument preceding the barrow and, consequently, it is probable that long barrows acted as important ritual sites for local communities over a considerable period of time. Some 500 long barrows are recorded in England. As one of the few types of Neolithic structure to survive as earthworks, and due to their comparative rarity, their considerable age and their longevity as a monument type, all long barrows are considered to be nationally important.

The 180 long barrows of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset form the densest and one of the most significant concentrations of monuments of this type in the country. Only three examples, however, are known on the Isle of Wight thus making the Longstone an important monument for understanding the nature and scale of Neolithic occupation on the island.

Jacquetta Hawkes = Long Stone excavations.



The daughter of a Nobel prize-winning biochemist, Jacquetta was born in 1910 and became the first woman to take a degree in archaeology and anthropology. Jacquetta married the eminent archaeologist Christopher Hawkes, and together they took part in many excavations.

After the Second World War she met the author J.B. Priestley, eventually marrying and moving with him to Brook Hill House which adjoins the Mottistone Estate to the west. She began to excavate the Longstone in 1956, publishing her findings in the Journal 'Antiquity' the next year. Until that time it was not realised that the Longstone was in fact the remains of an entrance to a Neolithic long barrow. She died in March 1996.

Sources:

Books and journals

Hawkes, J, 'Antiquity' in The Longstone, Mottistone, Vol. 31, (1957)

University of Bradford Archive.

Historic England.

The National Trust.