

# Prehistory Part 2

## Neolithic Life



3900-3400 BCE, 2.2m long, probably oak



Hunter gatherers did not make fired clay vessels

This new idea came into the British Isles after about 4000 BCE

Part of the 'farming lifestyle package' - often called the **Neolithic Period** or New Stone Age

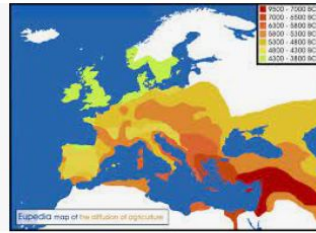
Farming was established around 2000 years **before** across mainland Europe



The Spread of Early Farming in Europe  
[scholar.princeton.edu](http://scholar.princeton.edu)



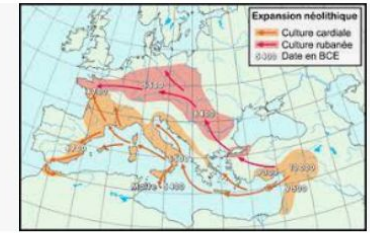
Neolithic Europe - Wikipedia  
[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)



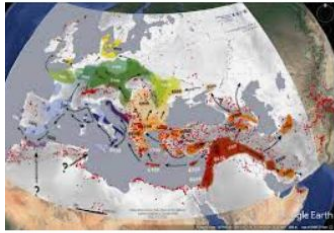
Map of the diffusion of agriculture ...  
[wikipedia.com](http://wikipedia.com)



The spread of farming across E...  
[researchgate.net](http://researchgate.net)



Neolithic Europe - Wikipedia  
[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)



Agricultural Biodiversity Weblog  
[gro.biodiver.se](http://gro.biodiver.se)



Farming spreads through Europe  
[en.natmus.dk](http://en.natmus.dk)



Neolithic Revolution - Wikipedia  
[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)



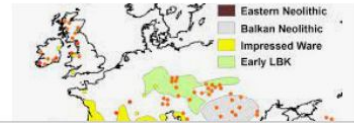
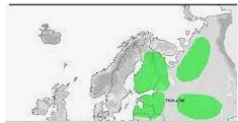
The Spread of Agricul...  
[journals.uchicago.edu](http://journals.uchicago.edu)



The Spread of Early Farming in Europe  
[scholar.princeton.edu](http://scholar.princeton.edu)



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[scholar.princeton.edu](http://scholar.princeton.edu)



Origin and spread of agriculture has fuelled debate, sold books and founded whole careers since the turn of the 19th-20th century

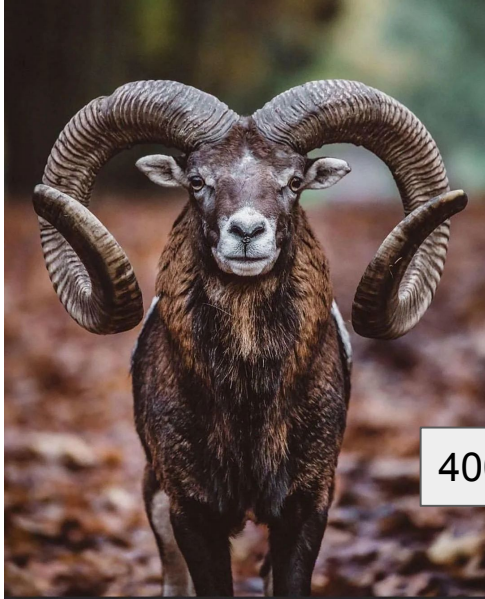
Debate about the origins of farming illuminates contemporary views on society like no other

Eg 19th-20th century: 'superior races' spreading inventions, usually from Biblical lands

Post-1919: indigenous simultaneous response to community needs (VG Childe)

DNA studies now demonstrate that the first domestication of certain key crops and animals happened in southern Anatolia, northern Zagros Mountains and the Levant, from around 9000 BCE onwards

# Thousands of years of breeding involved in each species' domestication



Mouflon, nearest modern animal to the wild sheep ancestor

4000 years



Soay sheep, nearest equivalent to Neolithic domesticated sheep

Another 4000 years



Modern Merino sheep

Moreover recent discoveries at Göbekli Tepe, south eastern Turkey, suggest there was not a simple explanation for the emergence of farming



Complex stone buildings with carved embellishments built by hunter-gatherer communities, around 9600 - 7000 BCE

Massive seasonal barbecues  
Animals brought from wide areas and kept penned

Developments on mainland Europe led to complex wealthy Neolithic communities by 5000 BCE

By the time that farming began here, people in eastern Europe were using metals such as copper and gold

Eg Varna, Bulgaria,  
around 4600 BCE  
The earliest dated use  
of gold adornment

This new idea took  
another 2000 years to  
reach British Isles



Studies of the past in Britain have always had a certain focus



Vivid sites like Stonehenge have been re-examined over many recent generations

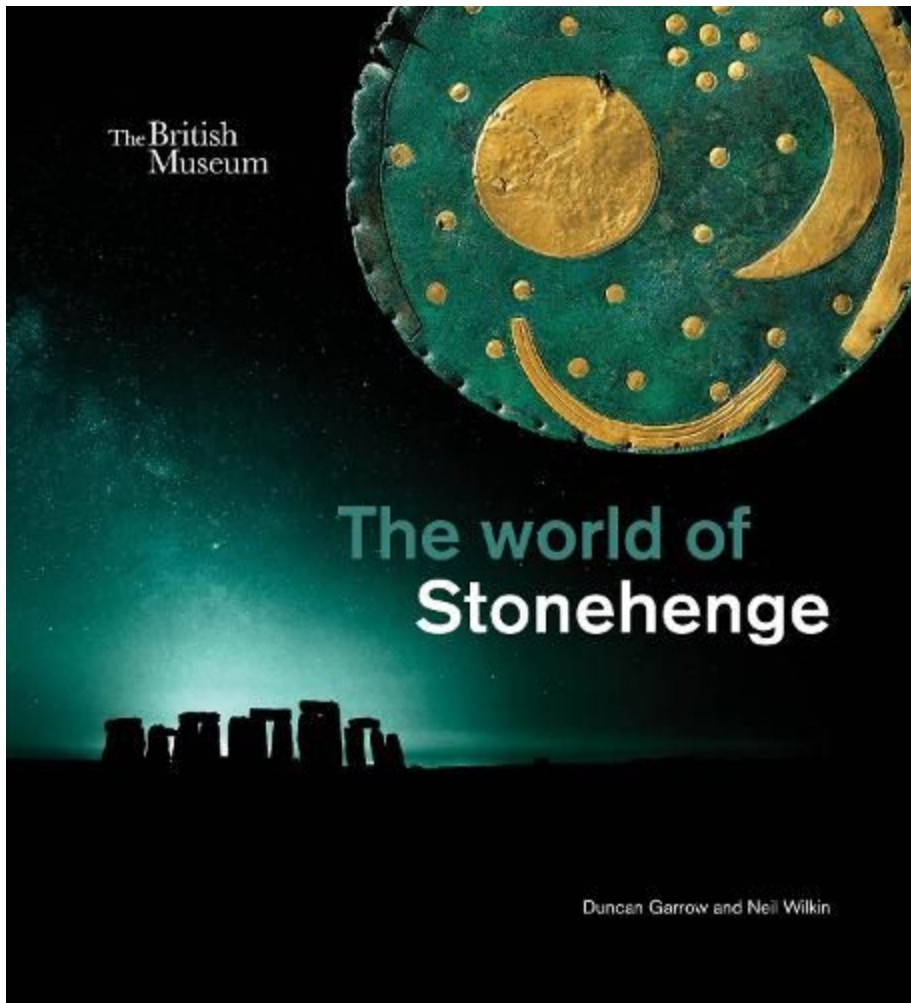




An ever more complex landscape is emerging at these site, extending over 5-6000 years

200m



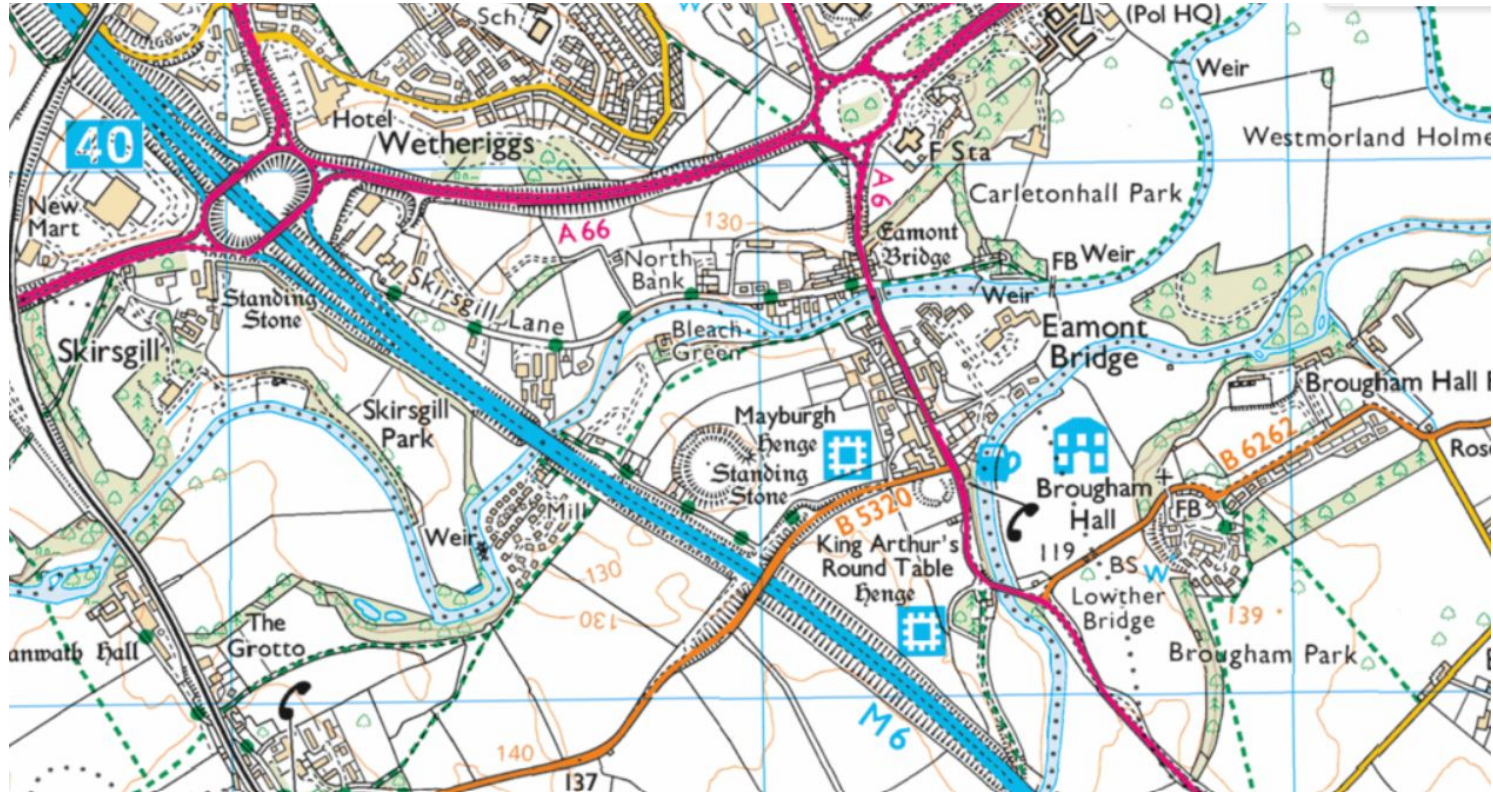


Improved archaeological techniques allow better depth and breadth of research

Currently research points to shared features of life across British Isles, that lasted some 2000+years eg

- 'sacred circles'
- large earth and stone chambered tombs, often with spiral artwork

Not all places have had as much attention as Stonehenge eg  
Mayburgh Henge, Eamont Bridge





200m



# Lidar view of Mayburgh and adjacent sites

## Explore

[https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=18&lat=54.64863&lon=-2.74637&layers=6&right=LIDAR\\_DTM\\_1m](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=18&lat=54.64863&lon=-2.74637&layers=6&right=LIDAR_DTM_1m)



## Long Meg, east of Penrith

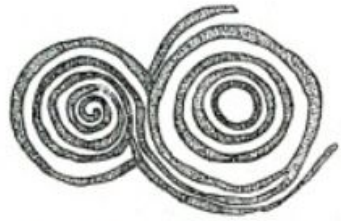
Small excavation plus fieldwork in 2013-15

They found very few, but very important artefacts

Eg fragments of Grooved Ware, fragments of Langdale axes, small Arran Pitchstone blades

Also discovered that, like Stainton West, this site was used from around 5000 to 3000 BCE

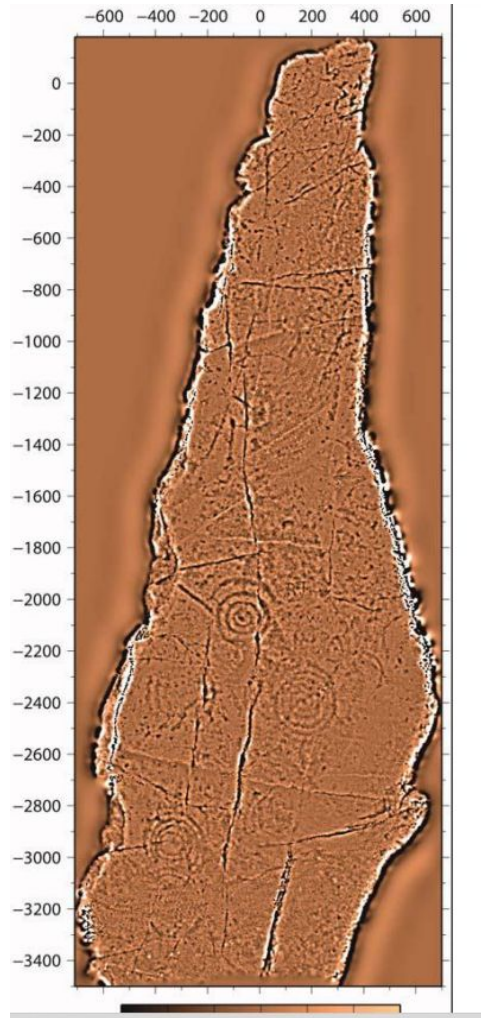




In a nearby field, Little Meg

A small (3m dia) stone circle

Believed to be the remains of a burial mound made of earth and stones with a small chamber inside it



2013 laser scan of the upright standing stone at Long Meg showing spiral artwork





Infra-red aerial view  
The farmhouse is in  
an previously  
unseen enclosure

Excavation shows  
this was a  
Mesolithic feature  
and the stone circle  
was deliberately  
built next to it

## Castlerigg, SE of Keswick

No 'modern' excavations

1985 geophys survey not  
published

2004: laser scanning of  
stones showed modern  
graffiti but nothing earlier



<https://goo.gl/maps/ynkkEghurmGNtMrC7>

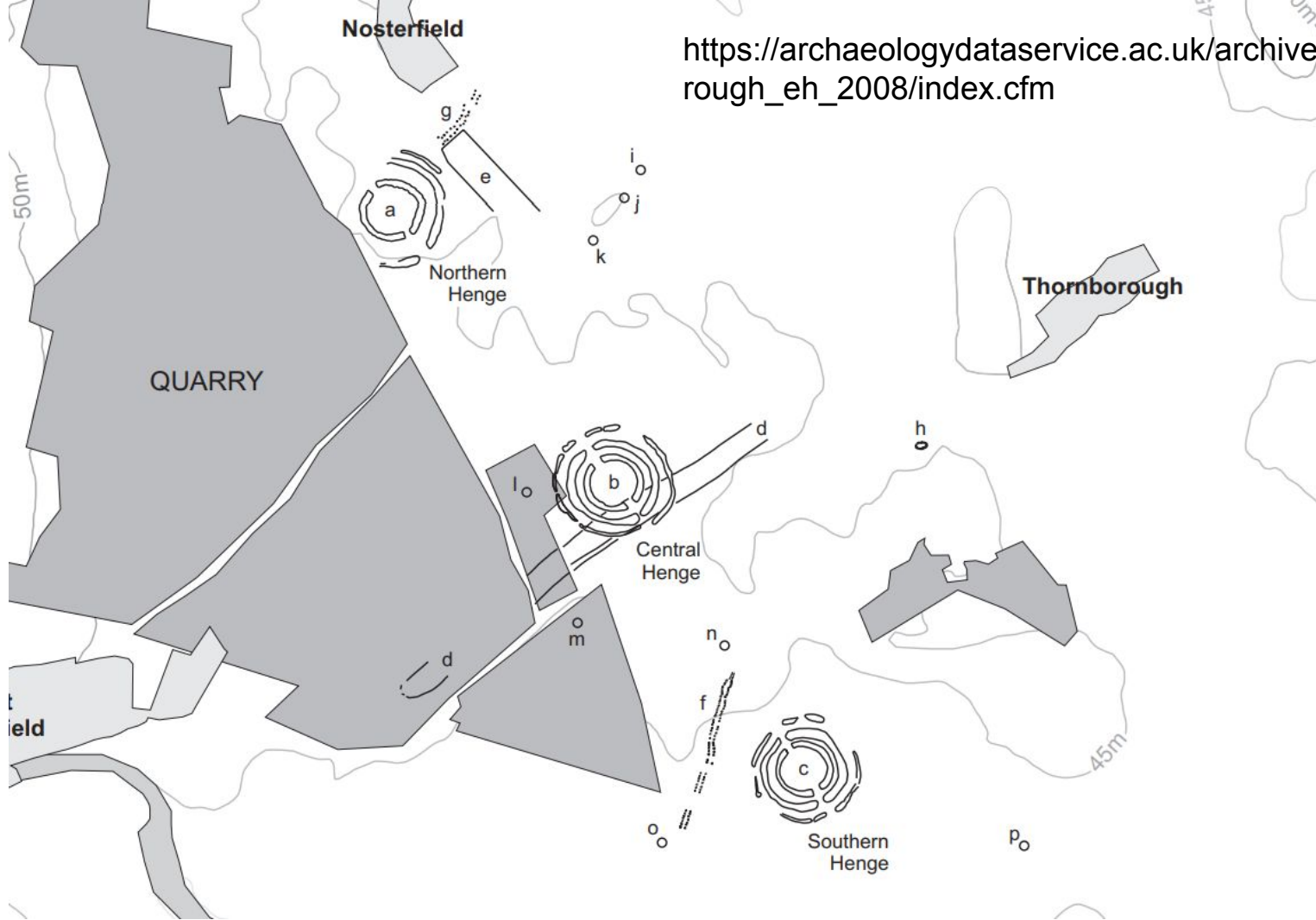
## Thornborough, North Yorkshire, just for info....

Three earth circles and a vast  
cursus, plus other features

An active gravel extraction  
site under grave danger



[https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/thornborough\\_eh\\_2008/index.cfm](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/thornborough_eh_2008/index.cfm)



All are agreed that many stone circles were in use, if not created, when metallurgy had arrived in Britain

### **'The Bronze Age'**

Where was the copper from the Barrow Hoard (2018) mined, where did the tin come from, how was it smelted?

Where did the people live who made these objects

Gaps in the evidence!



# Elite groups wielding steel swords c 800 BCE onwards: the Iron Age in Britain

Embleton near Bassenthwaite, found 1870s

Bought by British Museum 1930s

Sword blade over 540cm long

Full write-up and photos:

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H\\_1870-1013-5](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1870-1013-5)



# Iron Age and Celtic Identity

Evidence is clear that certain objects can be seen across Iron Age Europe

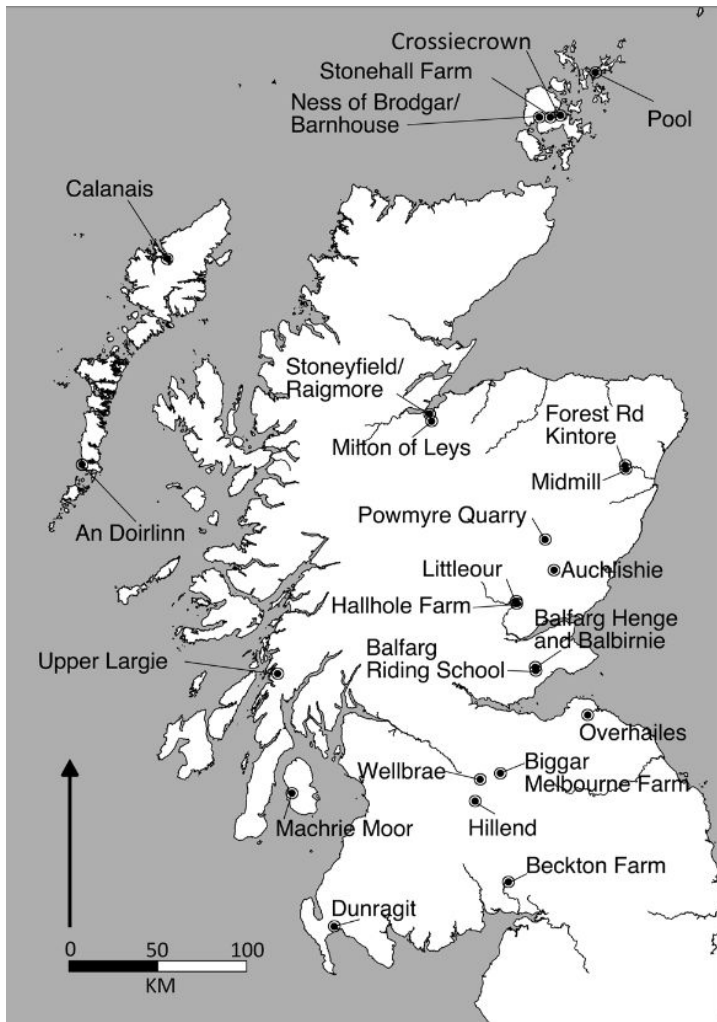
- Swords
- Beautiful scrollwork and enamel-work on metal items such as jewellery
- Neck-rings, or torcs
- Elite single burials in large earth mounds....may be that one mound at Mayburgh, Eamont bridge, fits that category
- These were the societies that encountered the Romans



## So back to the Grooved Ware

- currently believed to have first developed in Orkney
- Made to common designs, from local clays
- appears to have been associated with value, status, ritual
- eg Beckton Farm, Lockerbie - used as cremation urns (1997 dig)
- This is why boring bits of old broken pot are immensely valuable for the stories they tell





Grooved Ware - spreading from north to south

But this map (and the research funding) ended at the modern Scottish border!

No dots for Stainton west and Long Meg

<https://www.nessoofbrodgar.co.uk/introducing-ceramics-an-abundance-of-pottery/>

**Mike Copper's recent study**

<https://annrocks.co.uk/2014/04/expanding-horizons-raw-material-use-during-the-late-mesolithic-at-stainton-west-carlisle-cumbria/>

Huge map

<https://i0.wp.com/annrocks.co.uk/files/2014/04/CNDRPoster1.jpg?ssl=1>

Local copy

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric\\_Cumbria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_Cumbria)

# Bronze age etc

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prehistoric/past/past29.html#Excavations>

More papers

[https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/cumberland/contents.cfm?vol\\_id=753](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/cumberland/contents.cfm?vol_id=753)