

The Mystery of Stonehenge's Bluestones

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Sophia Centre Summer School 2019 :::: Lampeter

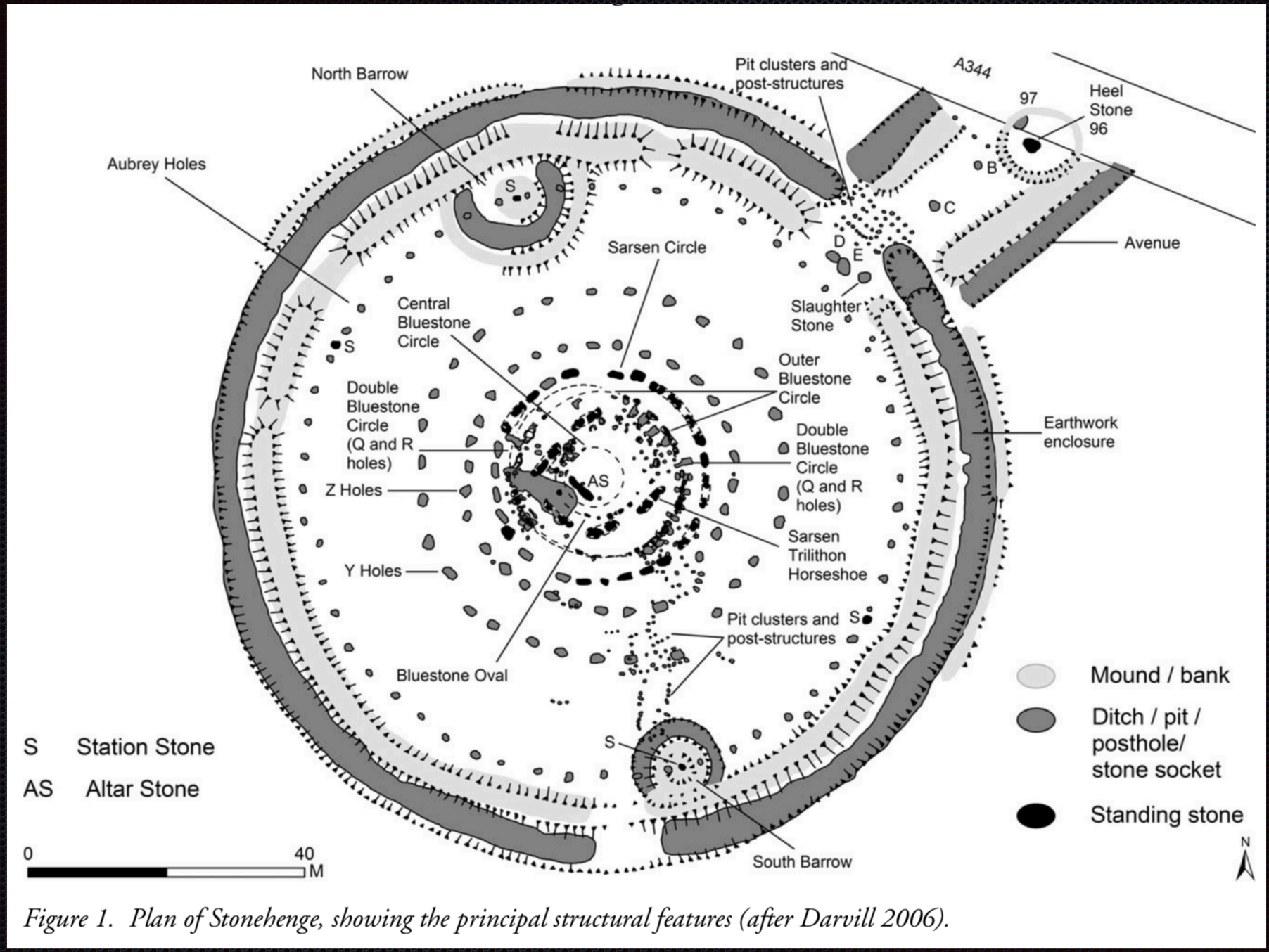
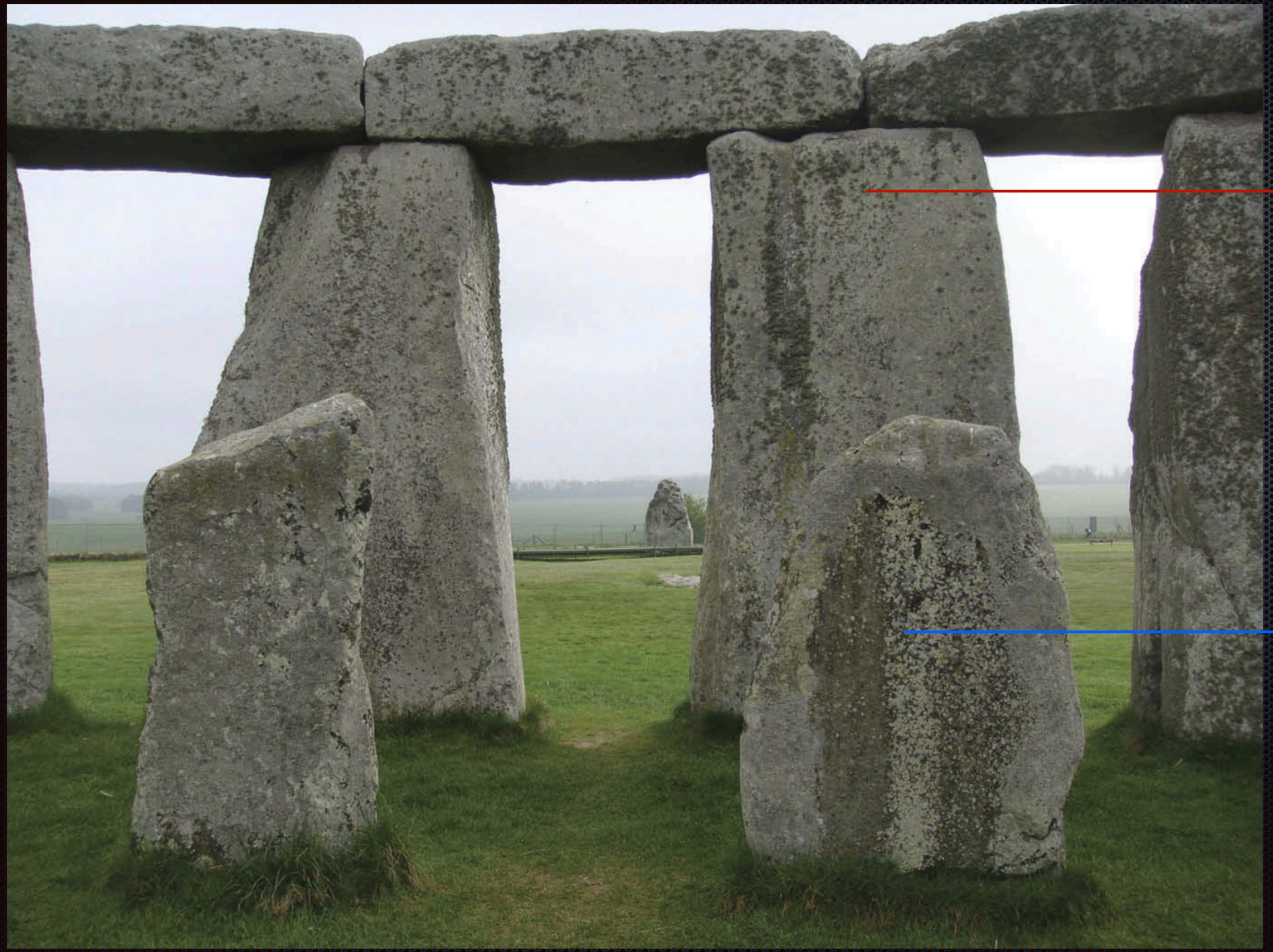


Figure 1. Plan of Stonehenge, showing the principal structural features (after Darvill 2006).



Sarsen stone

Trilithons

Locally sourced

Bluestones

Uprights

Spotted dolerite

Preseli Hills sourced

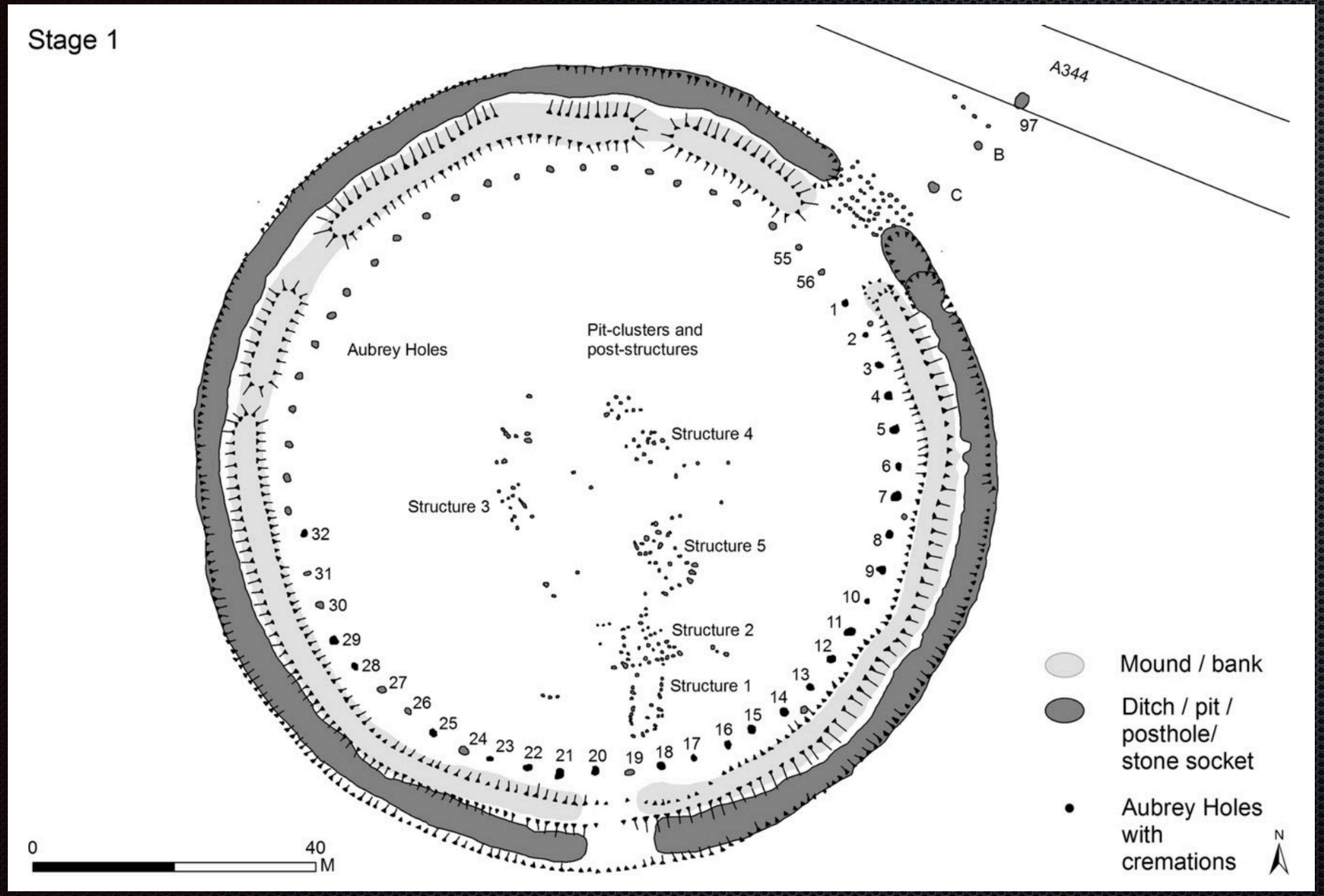


“Every age gets the Stonehenge it deserves — and desires.”

Jacqueta Hawkes (1967)

J Hawkes (1967) God in the Machine. *Antiquity* 41: 174-80.

Stage 1. 3,000 - 2,620 BCE



- Construction of a circular earthwork enclosure 110m in diameter bounded by a bank and ditch with main access on the NE and smaller entrance to the S (3000–2920 cal BC).

- Deposition of ancestral tokens in the base of the ditch.

- Digging of 56 Aubrey holes around the inner edge of bank, **possibly to hold bluestones** and/or posts.

- Cremation burials begin to be inserted into the ditch, bank, and Aubrey holes.

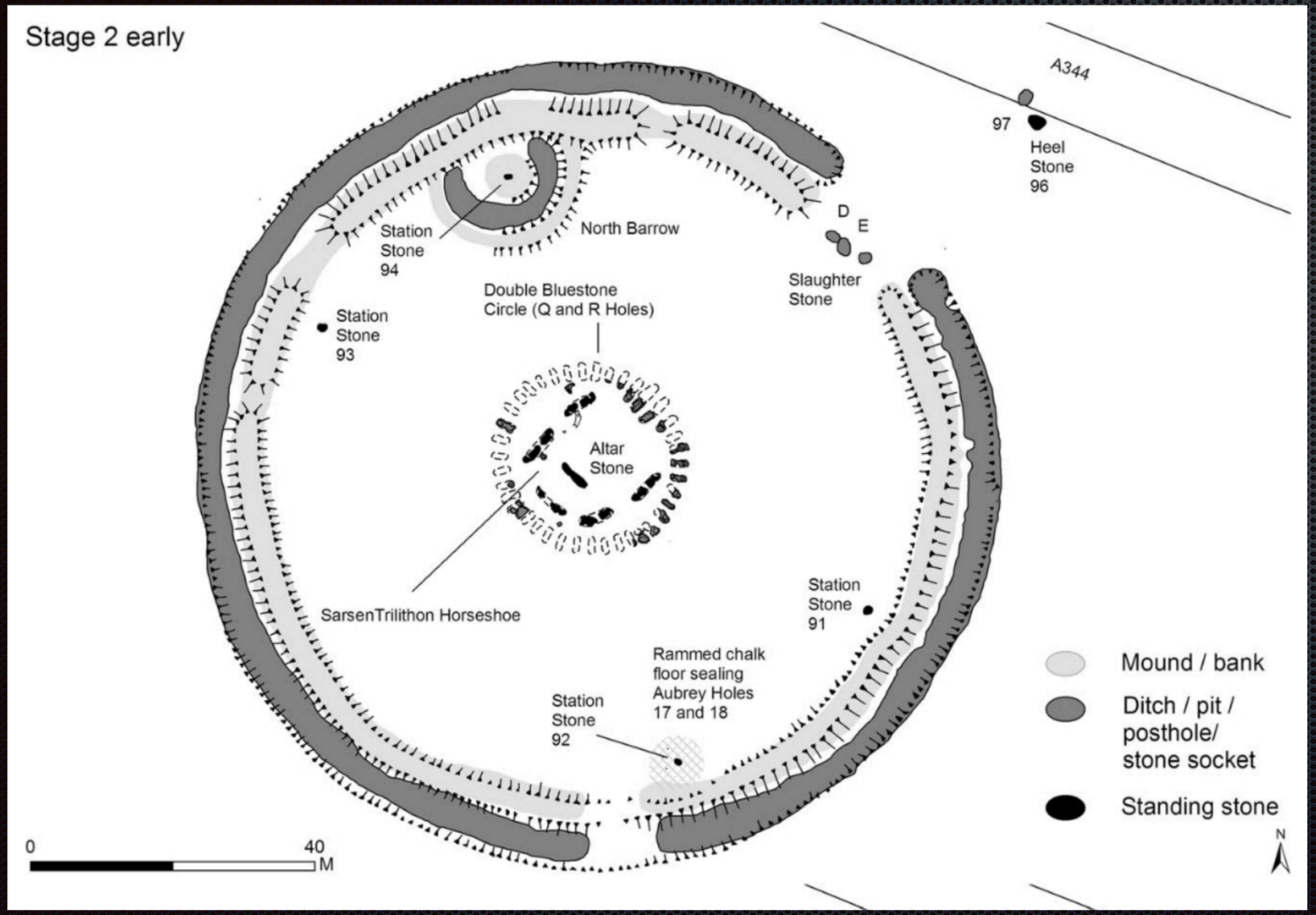
- Pits dug in the central area.

- Timber posts and stakes set up, in some cases forming simple rectangular structures.

- Possibly in this stage (or earlier) a post-built structure in the NE entrance; stones B, C and 97 outside the NE entrance.

T Darvill et al (2012) Stonehenge remodelled. *Antiquity* 86: 1021-1040.

Stage 2. 2,620 - 2,480 BCE



T Darvill et al (2012) Stonehenge remodelled. *Antiquity* 86: 1021-1040.

- Trilithon horseshoe comprising five sarsen trilithons set up in the centre of the site with SW–NE solstitial axis (midwinter sunset/midsummer sunrise).

- **Double bluestone circle of between 50 and 80 bluestones set up outside the trilithon horseshoe with a shared SW–NE axis.**

- Sarsen circle comprising 30 shaped uprights linked by 30 lintels built outside the double bluestone circle.

- Altar stone perhaps placed within the trilithon horseshoe.

- Four Station stones.

- A D-shaped rammed chalk floor (?structure) around stone 92 at the SE entrance superceded by the south barrow.

- Stones B and C removed. Stone 95 (Slaughter stone) erected with stones D and E added inside the NE entrance.

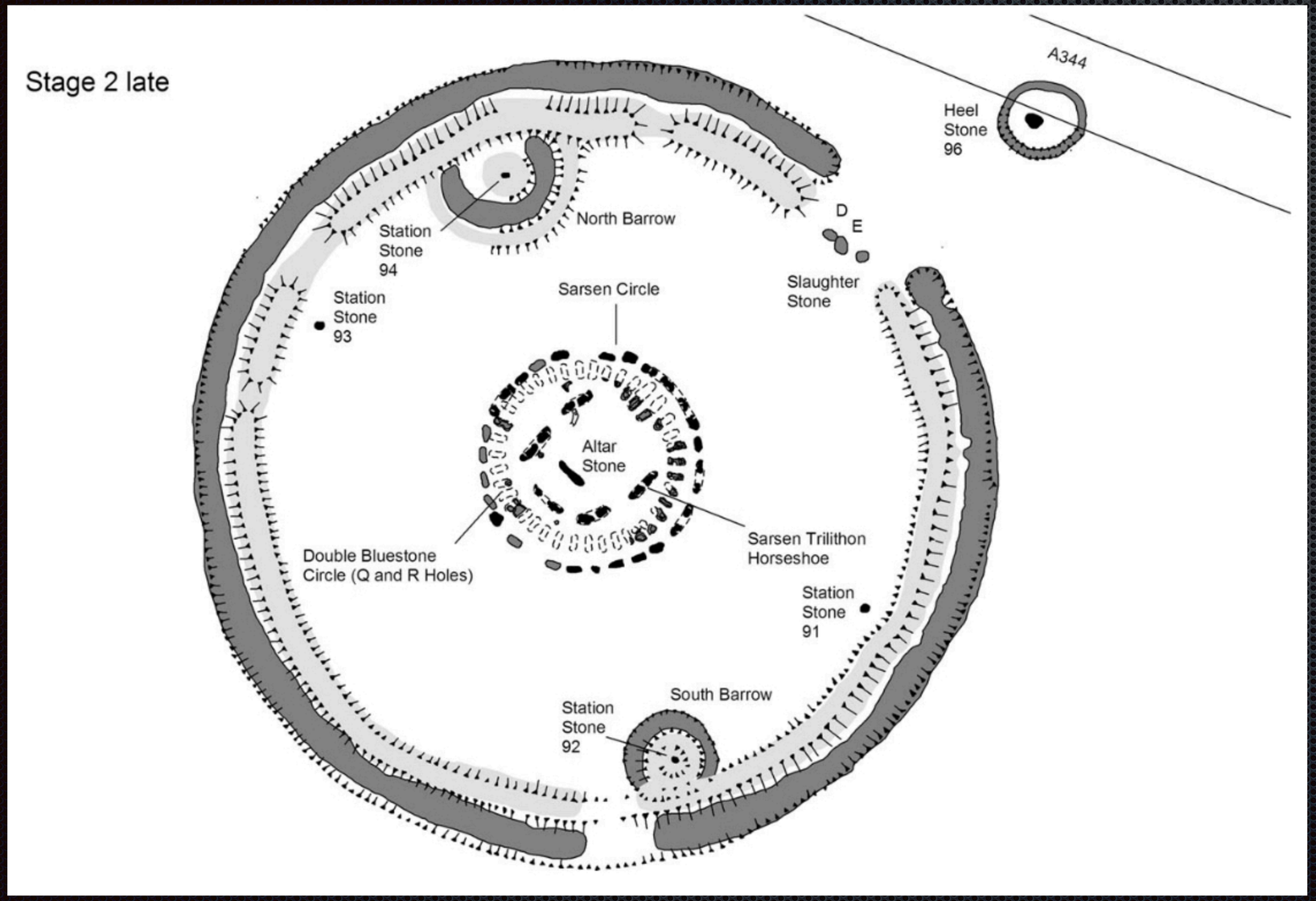
- Possible modifications to the earthworks in the NE entrance.

- Cremations continue to be deposited through to c. 2400 cal BC.

- EITHER stone 96 (Heel stone) added to the existing stone 97 outside the NE entrance to form a pair fixing the solstice axis OR the stone formerly in stonehole 97 removed and re-erected as stone 96 (Heel stone).

- Ditch dug around the Heel stone (or early Stage 3).

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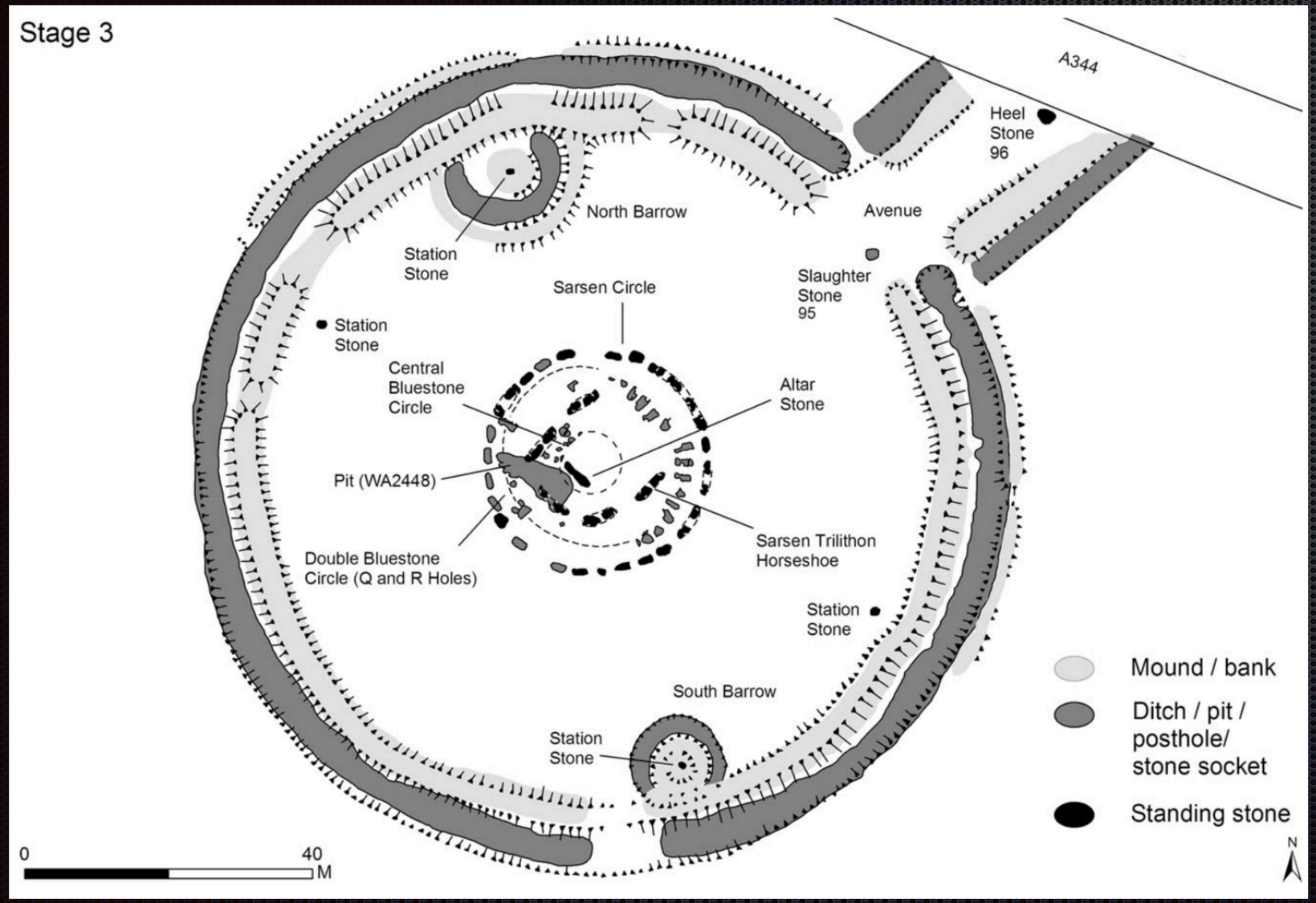
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Stage 3. 2,480 - 2,280 BCE



- **Bluestones (perhaps from Bluestonehenge) arranged as the central bluestone circle within the trilithon horseshoe.**

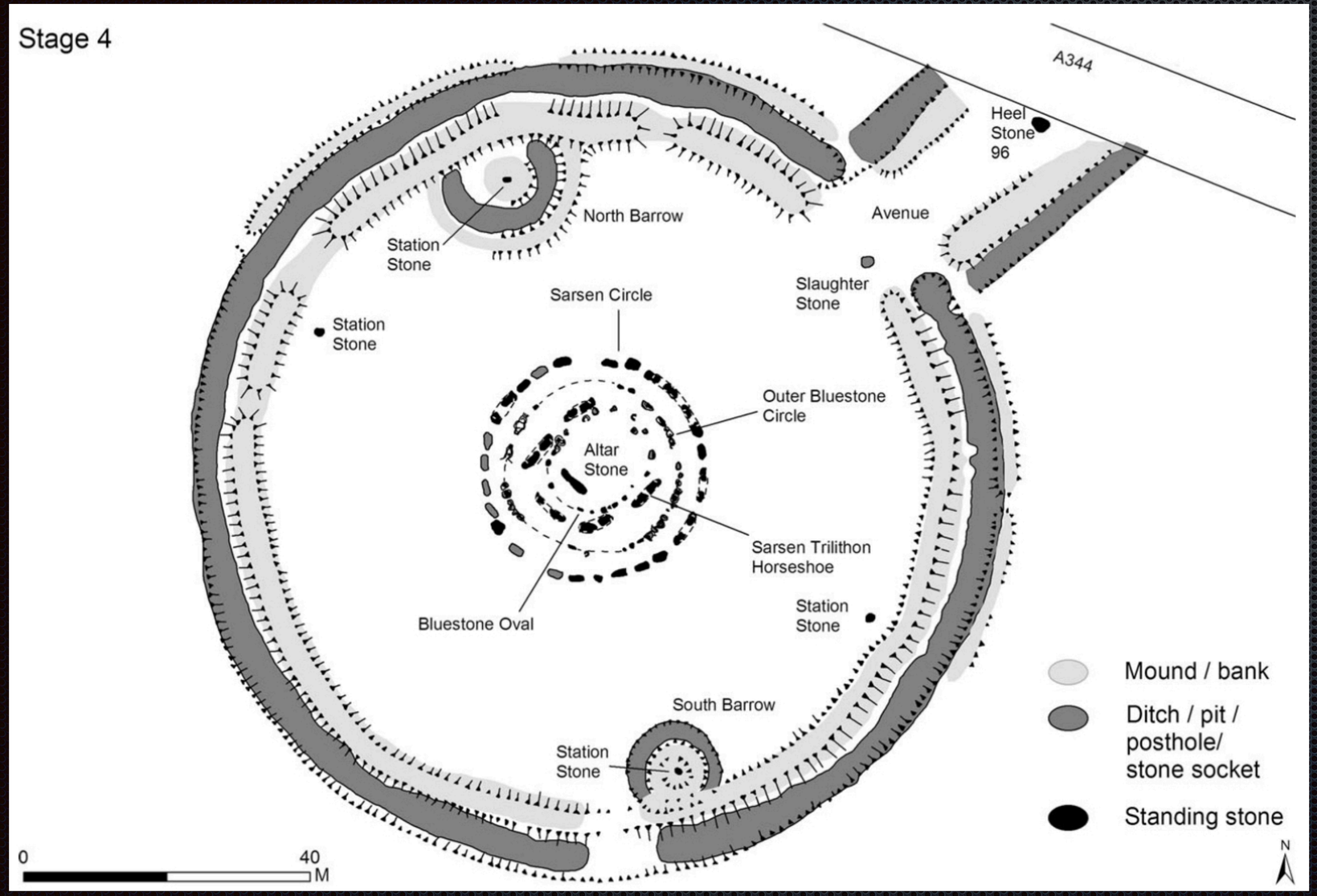
- Main ditch recut.

- Stones D and E in the NE entrance removed. Avenue constructed to link Stonehenge to the henge built around the former Bluestonehenge beside the River Avon 2.8km away.

- Large pit dug against great trilithon. Beaker-style inhumation burial in ditch.

T Darvill et al (2012) Stonehenge remodelled. *Antiquity* 86: 1021-1040.

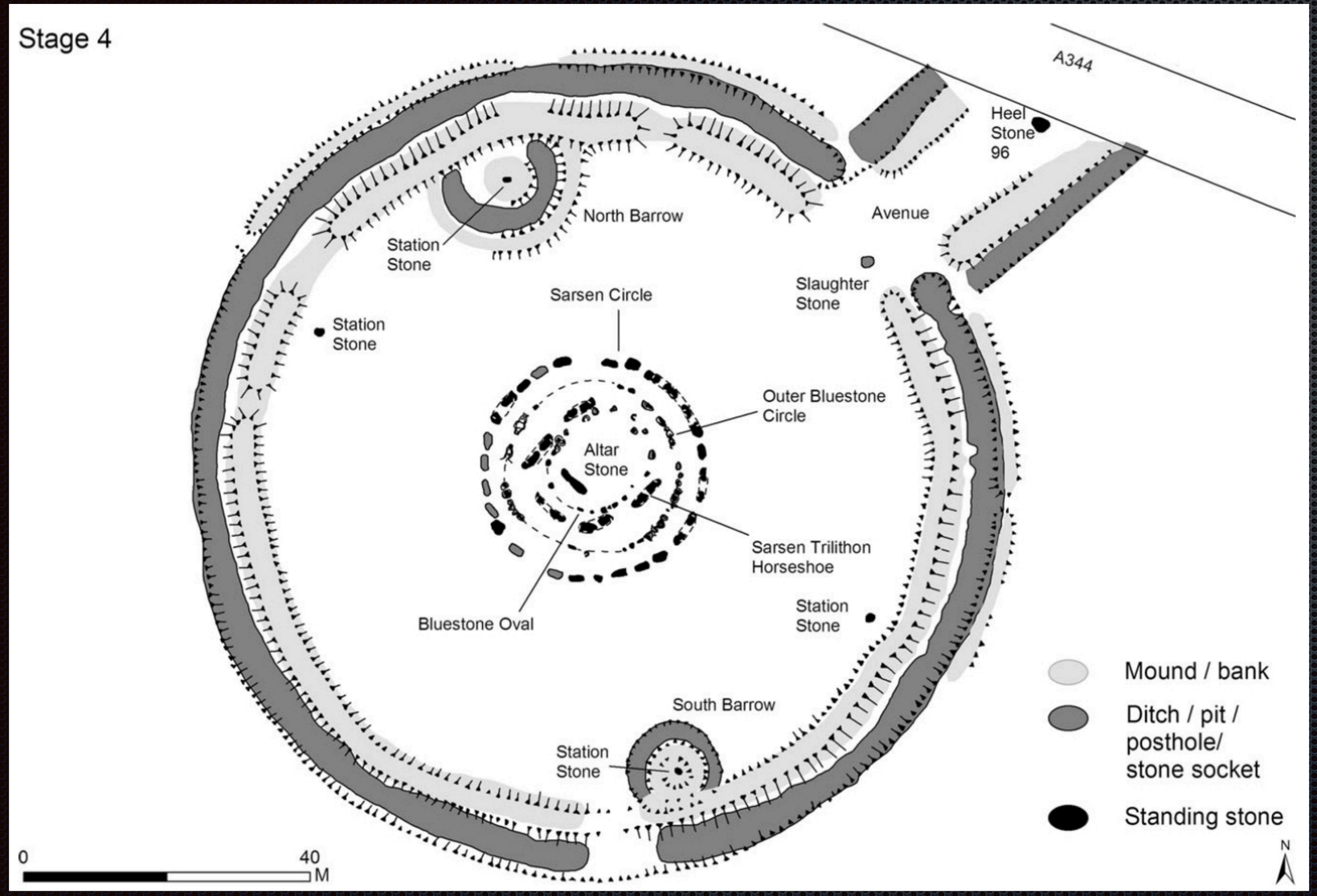
Stage 4. 2,280 - 2,020 BCE



- **Central bluestone circle and double bluestone circle dismantled and re-built** as bluestone oval of c. 25 monoliths inside the trilithon horseshoe and the outer bluestone circle of between 40 and 60 monoliths in the space between the trilithon horseshoe and the sarsen circle.

T Darvill et al (2012) Stonehenge remodelled. *Antiquity* 86: 1021-1040.

Stage 5. 2,020 - 1,520 BCE



- Extensive use of Stonehenge with **working of some bluestones into artefacts**.

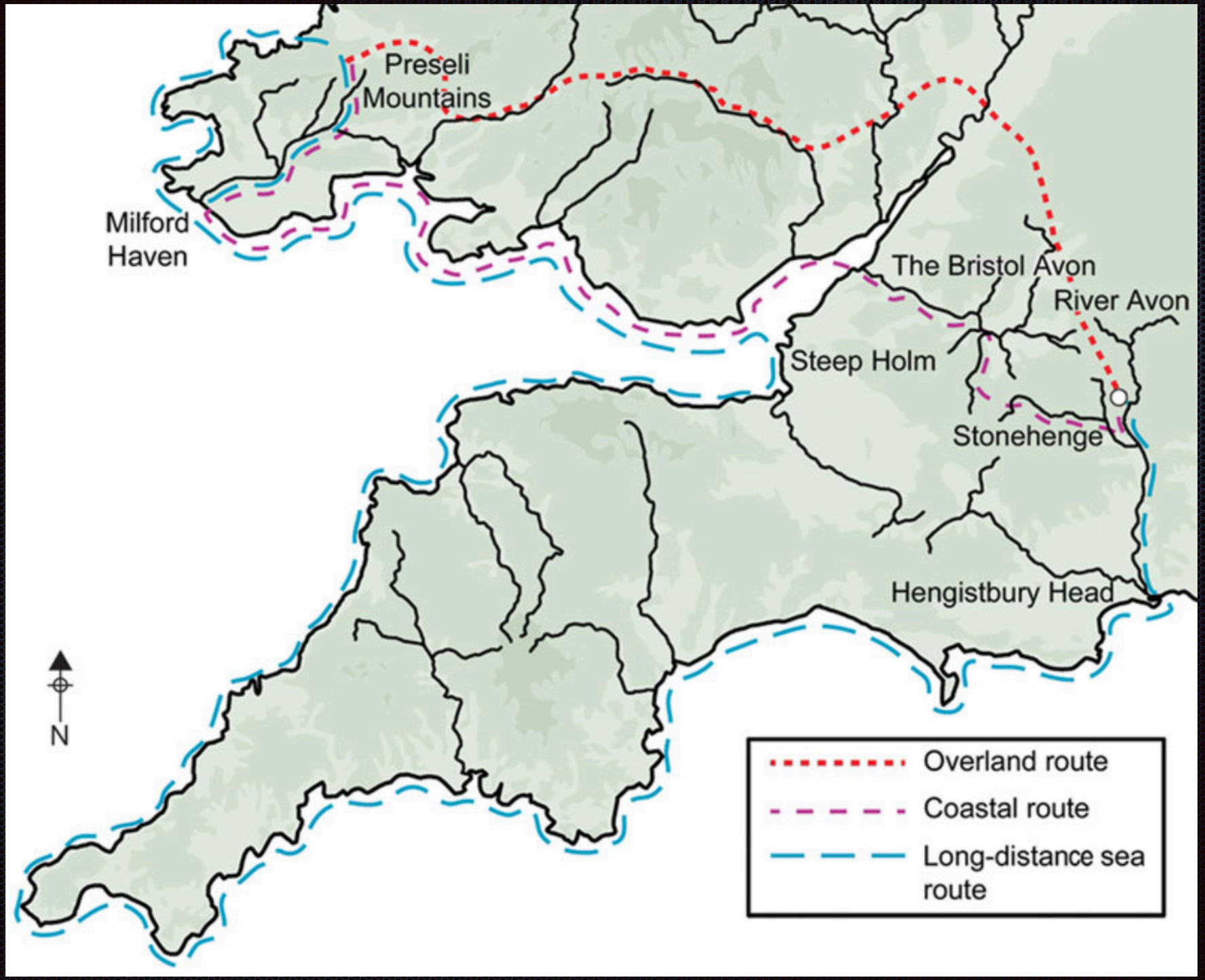
- Working floor and occupation outside the earthwork on the NW side.

- Rock-art including Arreton-stage axes and daggers applied (c. 1650–1500 cal BC) to stones forming the sarsen circle and trilithon horseshoe.

- Construction of the Y and Z holes in the period 1630–1520 cal BC.

- Numerous round barrow cemeteries built in the surrounding landscape.

T Darvill et al (2012) Stonehenge remodelled. *Antiquity* 86: 1021-1040.


Preseli Mountains
Milford Haven
The Bristol Avon
River Avon
Steep Holm
Stonehenge
Hengistbury Head
N
Overland route
Coastal route
Long-distance sea route



Why did they go to so much trouble?

Unification (Parker Pearson)

Healing (Darvill)



Why did they go to so much trouble?

Politics (Parker Pearson)

Beliefs (Darvill)



Unification Theory

"Gordon Childe (1957: 331) suggested that [the bluestones] were **indicative of political unification or a sacred peace**. Unification is certainly a possibility given the increasingly widespread distribution of shared styles of material culture such as Middle Neolithic Peterborough Ware (c. 3400–2900 BC) across southern Britain at this time (Darvill 2010: 132–36). [...]

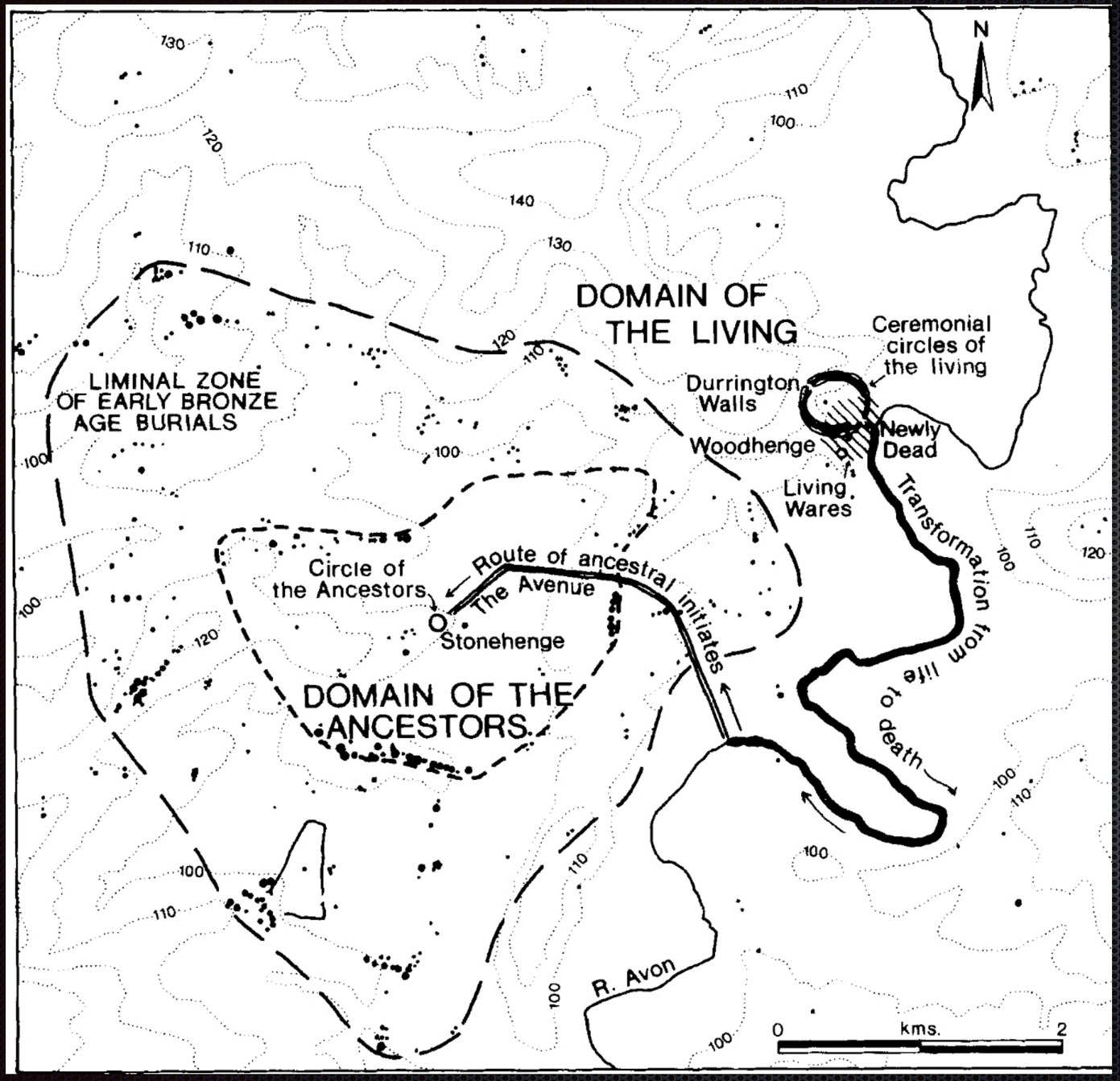
Alternatively, the bluestones were **brought by communities migrating eastwards and settling on Salisbury Plain**. [...]

Thus the motivation for moving the bluestones such a distance was probably related to **their significance as symbols of identity**. This supports the hypothesis that their identity was ancestral, **with stones representing the deceased ancestors** (Parker Pearson & Ramilisonina 1998), because the earliest contexts in which bluestones were placed—Boles Barrow and the Aubrey Holes—were monuments with ancestral and funerary associations (Parker Pearson et al. 2009; Parker Pearson 2012)."

V G Childe (1957) *The dawn of European civilisation*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

M Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina (1998) Stonehenge for the ancestors: the stones pass on the message. *Antiquity* 72: 308-26.

Unification Theory



Stone : Wood

Dead : Living

Stonehenge : Woodhenge/Durrington Walls

M Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina (1998) Stonehenge for the ancestors: the stones pass on the message. *Antiquity* 72: 308-26.

Unification Theory



Michael Parker Pearson

Healing Theory

"The demonstrable antiquity of stone extraction on Carn Menyn, long before the building of Stonehenge began, tells us something about the **ancestral significance and power of the landscape from which the bluestones were taken**. Perhaps Mynydd Preseli was the home of the gods: the Mount Olympus of Neolithic Britain.

But we also believe that the **association between bluestones and healing springs** in the Preseli Hills was important (cf. Jones 1992), and something that resonates with long-standing oral traditions that were first written down in the thirteenth century AD (Piggott 1941). **Springs were a significant and persistent feature of the Stonehenge landscape**, [...] thereby fixing and formalising the relationship to water (Darvill et al. 2012a: 1035).

The idea that powerful stones were moved from their source outcrops on a special, ancestral or sacred place to 'franchise' distant shrines and temples finds parallels in West African societies and elsewhere (Insoll 2006)."

Darvill & Wainwright 2014: 1112



T Darvill & G Wainwright (2011) The stones of Stonehenge. *Current Archaeology* 252: 28-35.

T Darvill & G Wainwright (2014) Beyond Stonehenge: Carn Menyn Quarry and the origin and date of bluestone extraction in the Preseli Hills of south-west Wales. *Antiquity* 88: 1099-1114.

Healing Theory

"We propose that, after the earthwork enclosure at Stonehenge ceased to be a major cremation cemetery sometime about 2500 BC, bluestones from Carn Menyn and other nearby outcrops in west Wales were brought to Stonehenge and set up within a temple whose structure had already been built from sarsen stones. From that time onwards, **pilgrims and travellers were drawn to Stonehenge because of the special properties that had empowered Stonehenge to provide pastoral and medical care of both body and soul**: tending the wounded, treating the sick, calming troubled minds, promoting fecundity, assisting and celebrating births and protecting people against malevolent forces in a dangerous and uncertain world.

The bluestones hold the key to the meaning of Stonehenge, and Preseli was the special place from whence they came at a high cost to society in labour and time, **as befitted such important talismans**."

Darvill & Wainwright 2014: 1112-3



T Darvill & G Wainwright (2011) The stones of Stonehenge. *Current Archaeology* 252: 28-35.

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Healing Theory

Timothy Darvill

Geoffrey Wainwright



Celestial Theory

Celestial Theory



Rock tripe lichen on Carn Goedog
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Spotted dolerite exposed on a horizontal outcrop on Carn Menyn, Presley Hills, Pembrokeshire.
© Timothy Darvill

Celestial Theory



At the source outcrops flat horizontal exposures reveal patterns of white spots **looking like stars and constellations as if the night sky is mirrored and fixed for ever in the face of the earth** (Fig. 11.1). At Stonehenge, blocks of the same stone were **set vertically around the inner sanctuary as if lining the precinct with representations of the sky**; powerful stones in their own right that I have argued were perceived to have magical healing properties (Darvill 2007).

Tim Darvill (2015)

T Darvill (2015) Afterword: Dances beneath a diamond sky. In F Silva and N Campion (eds) *Skyscapes: The Role and Importance of the Sky in* Archaeology, Oxford: Oxbow Books, page 142.

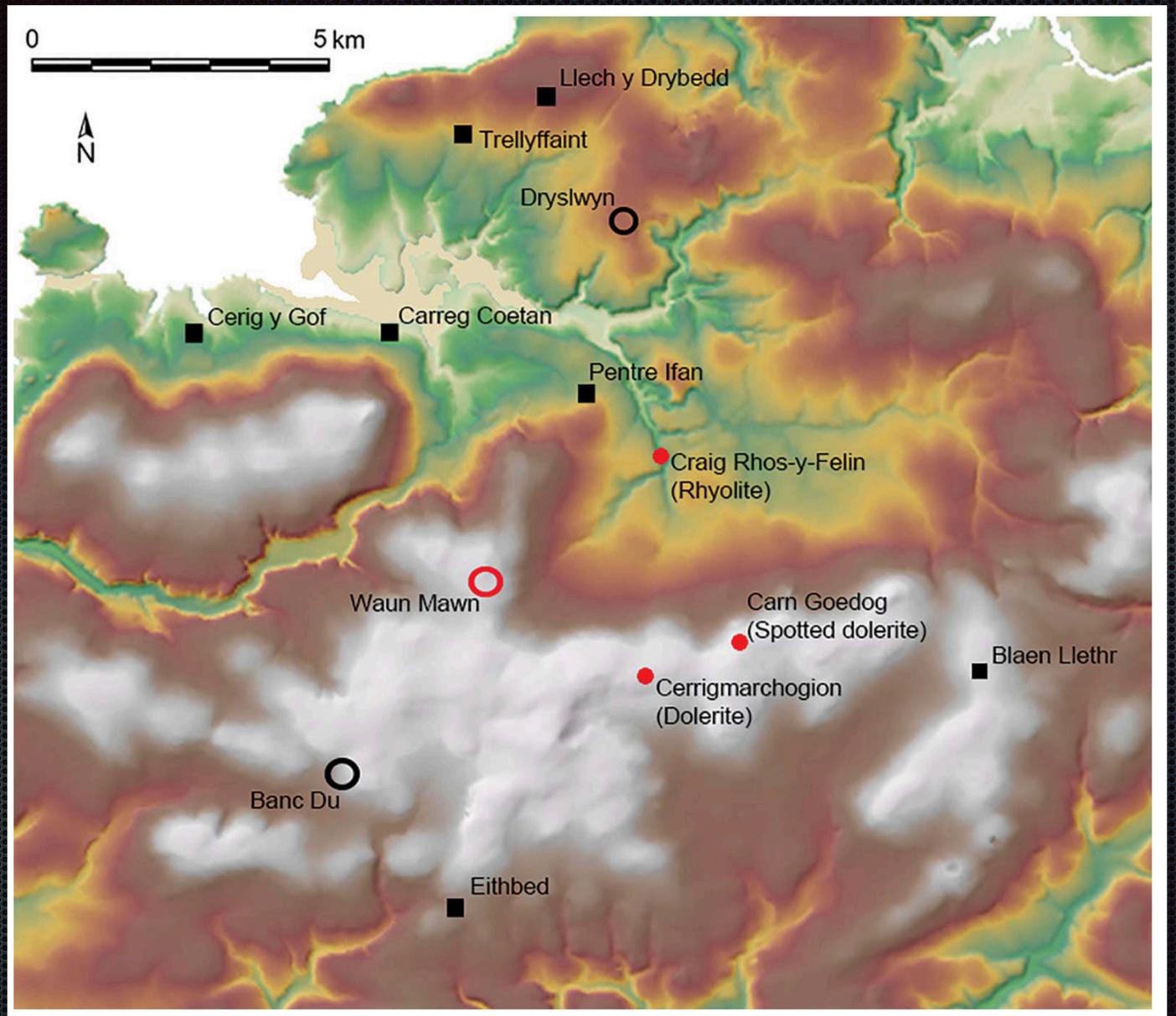


Figure 2. Locations of the bluestone sources of Carn Goedog (spotted dolerite), Craig Rhos-y-felin (rhyolite) and Cerrigmarchogion (unspotted dolerite). The locations of the former stone circle of Waun Mawn, the Neolithic causewayed enclosure of Banc Du and the palisaded enclosure of Dryslwyn, and Early Neolithic portal tombs (black squares) are also shown.

Carn Goedog



M Parker Pearson et al (2019) Megalith quarries for Stonehenge's bluestones. *Antiquity* 93: 45-62.

Carn Goedog



M Parker Pearson et al (2019) Megalith quarries for Stonehenge's bluestones. *Antiquity* 93: 45-62.

Craig Rhos-y-felin



M Parker Pearson et al (2015) Craig Rhos-y-felin: a Welsh bluestone megalith quarry for Stonehenge. *Antiquity* 89: 1331-1352.

Craig Rhos-y-felin



Figure 2. The outcrop at Craig Rhos-y-felin under excavation (viewed from the north-west): 1) the prone 4m-long monolith; 2) the threshold slab; 3) the artificial platform; 4) the recess left by the extracted monolith; 5) the orthostat beside the prone monolith; 6) the orthostat beside the recess of the removed monolith; 7) the Neolithic hearth; 8) the Neolithic occupation area; 9) the Early Mesolithic hearths; 10) the lower platform and revetment; 11) the location of the close match for Stonehenge 'rhyolite with fabric'. Photograph by Adam Stanford.

M Parker Pearson et al (2015) Craig Rhos-y-felin: a Welsh bluestone megalith quarry for Stonehenge. *Antiquity* 89: 1331-1352.

- https://www.heywhatsthat.com/?view=BWX6RF55
- https://www.heywhatsthat.com/?view=QB6W5A76
- https://archaeofsilva.shinyapps.io/skyscapeR-legacy/