

Sunhoney Recumbent Stone Circle: Exception or Template?

Liz Henty



Recumbent arrangements at Easter Aquorthies, Strichen, Castle Fraser and Cothiemuir Wood, Aberdeenshire



RSCs – Archaeoastronomical Analysis

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Sir Norman Lockyer, 1908. 'On the Observation of Sun and Stars Made in Some British Stone Circles, Third Note, The Aberdeenshire Circles.', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series A, Containing Papers of a Mathematical and Physical Character*, Vol. 80, No. 538.

Alexander Thom, 1967. *Megalithic Sites in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

C L N Ruggles and H A W Burl, 1985. 'A New Study of the Aberdeenshire Recumbent Stone Circles, 2: Interpretation' in *Archaeoastronomy No 8, Journal for the History of Astronomy*.

Clive Ruggles, 1999. *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Sunhoney Recumbent Stone Circle



Sunhoney panorama showing distant horizon

Meikle Tap

359 m

Alt 4.82°

Greymore

393 m

Alt 7.67°

Blackyduds

433 m

Alt 4.58°



Sunhoney Recumbent stone and flankers

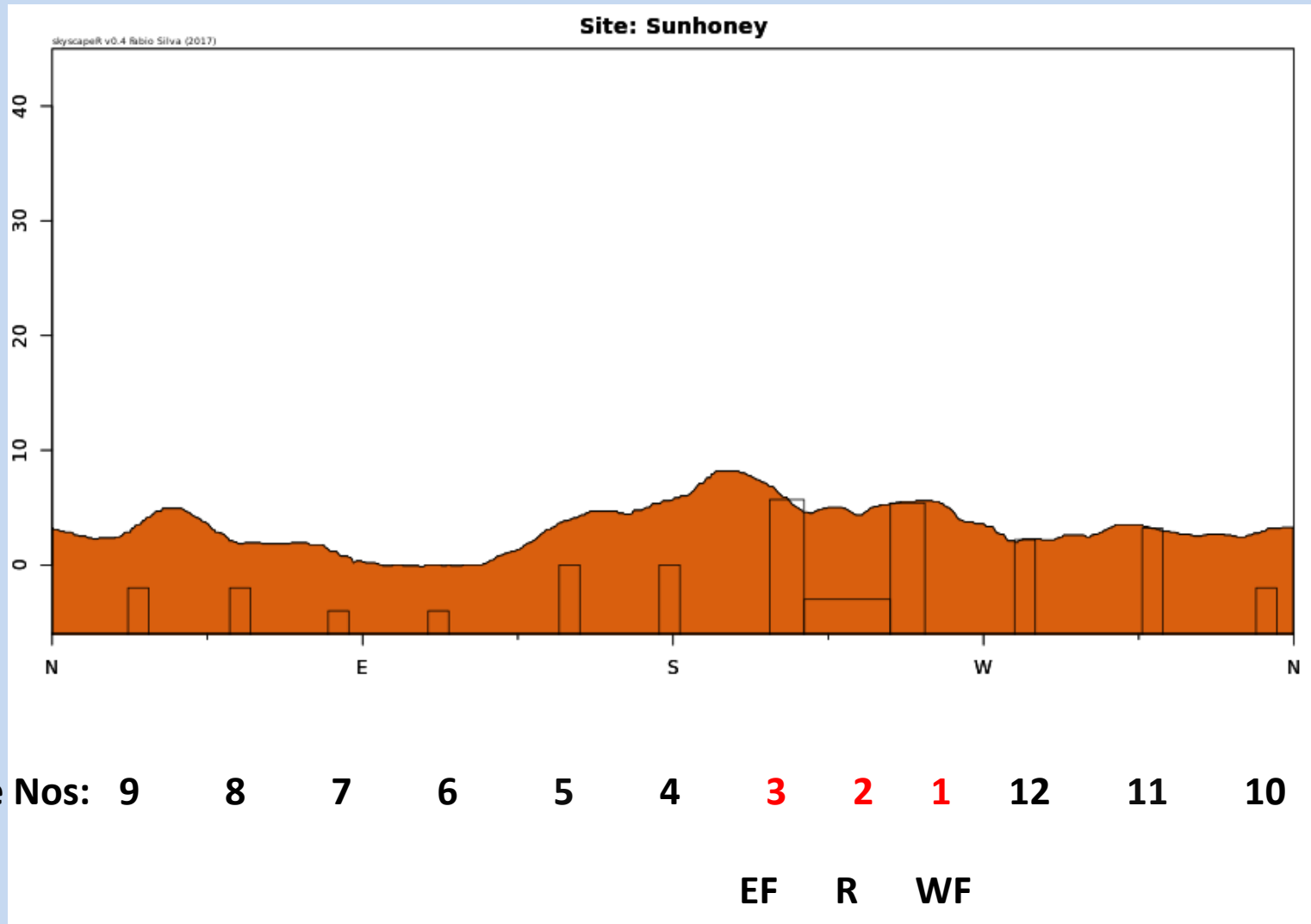


1904 image of Sunhoney recumbent showing some of the cupmarks © Historic Environment Scotland

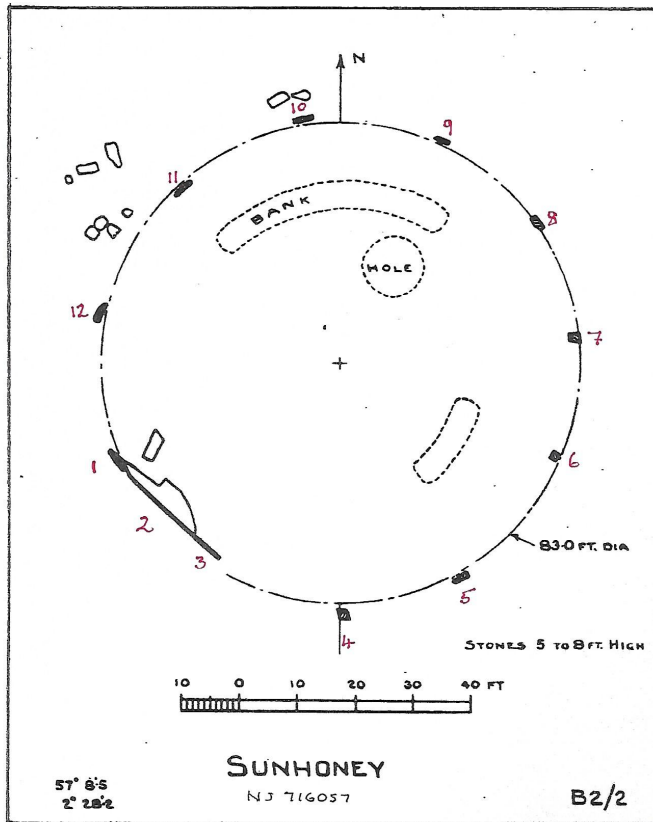


<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/678926>

Diagram of Sunhoney's horizon with simulations of the circle stones in the foreground



Sunhoney: the azimuth data

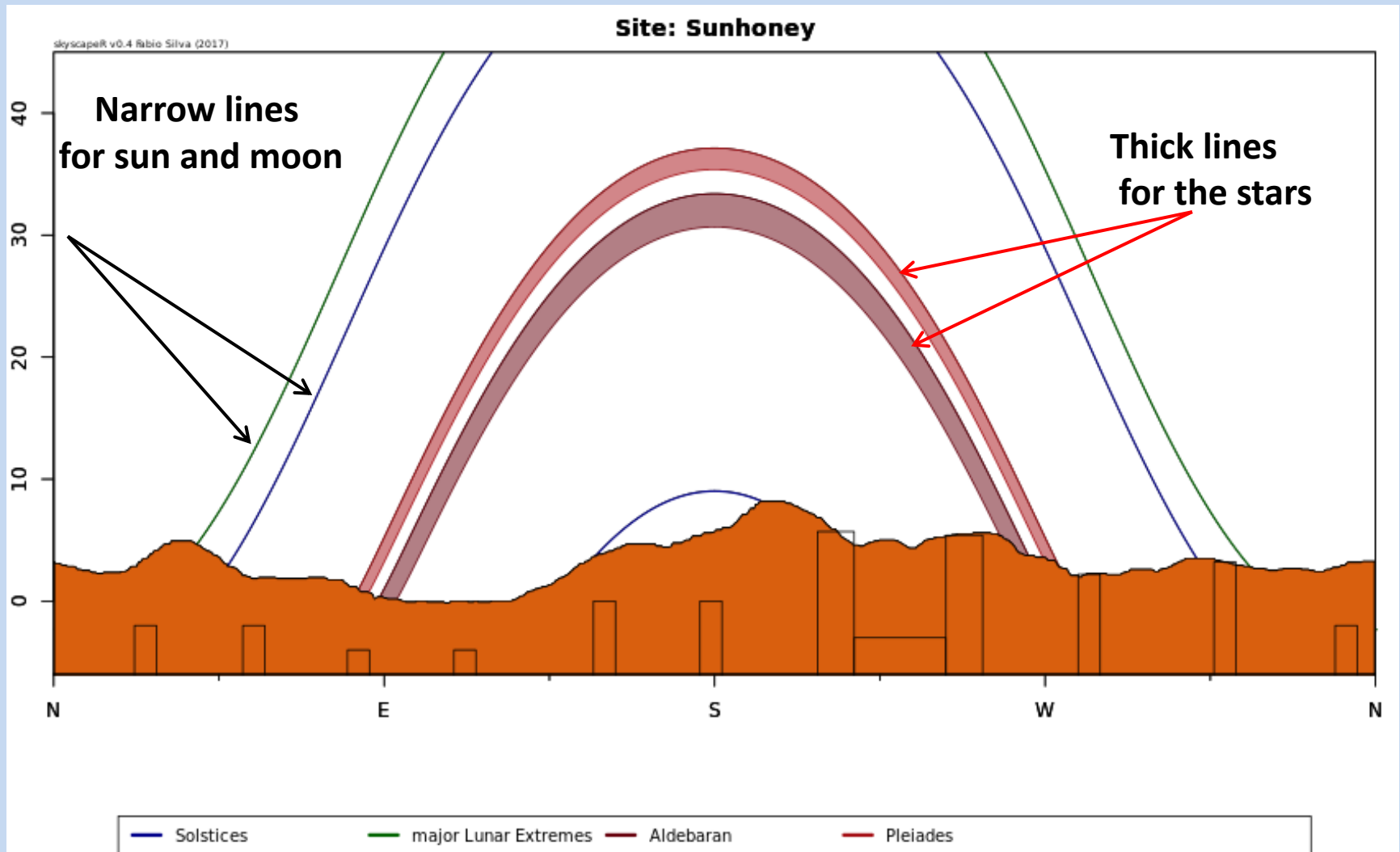


Clive Ruggles, 1999.
*Astronomy in Prehistoric
Britain and Ireland.*
Newhaven and London: Yale
University Press.

Canmore: National Record of
the Historic Environment
[https://canmore.org.uk/site/
18543/sunhoney](https://canmore.org.uk/site/18543/sunhoney)

Alexander Thom's plan of Sunhoney
with stones numbered according to
Historic Environment Scotland's plan

Diagram showing changes in declination for the sun, moon and some stars at Sunhoney between 2500 BC to 2000 BC

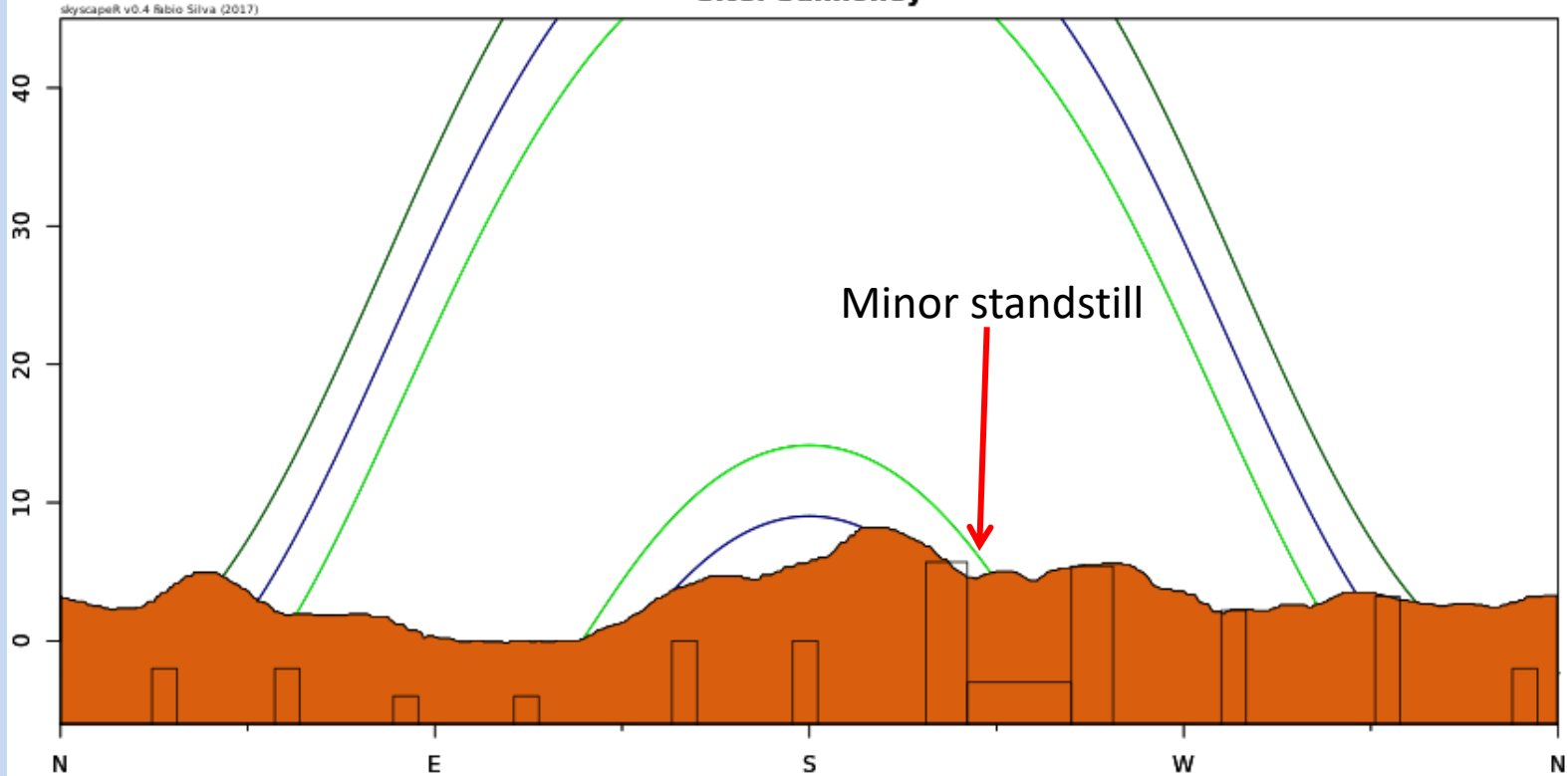


Stone Nos: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 12 11 10

Solstices and major and minor standstills at Sunhoney

2500 BC – 2000 BC

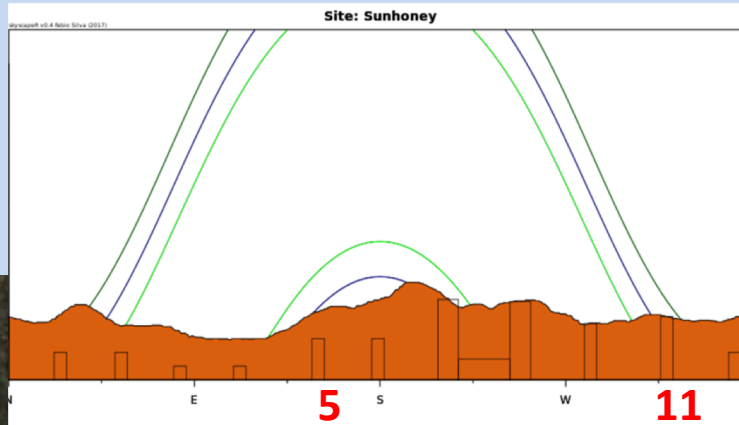
Site: Sunhoney



Stone Nos: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 12 11 10

— Solstices — minor Lunar Extremes — major Lunar Extremes

A possible pairing between the distinguishing shapes of stones 5 and 11 at Sunhoney

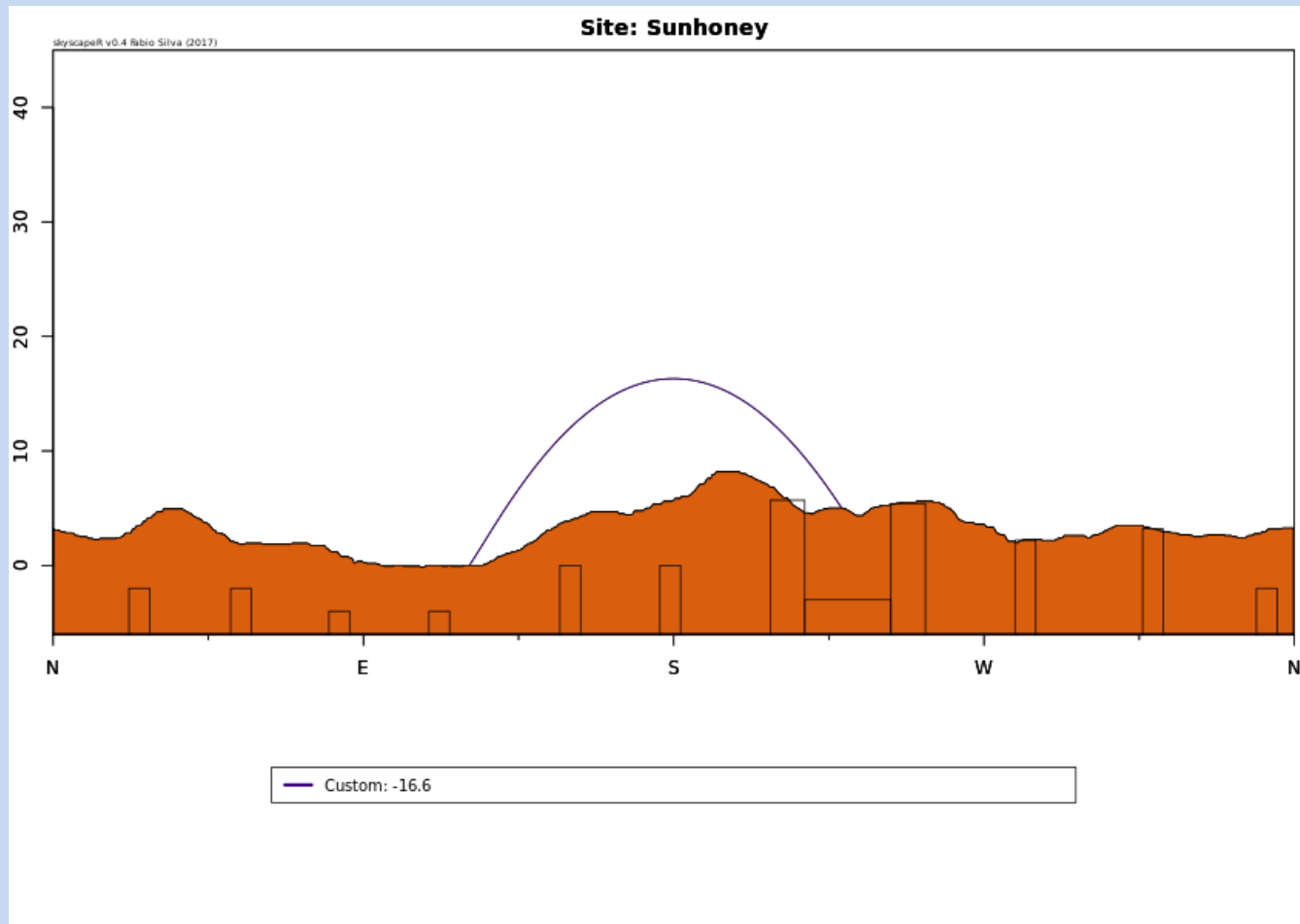


**Stone 5 marking winter solstice
sunrise in SE**



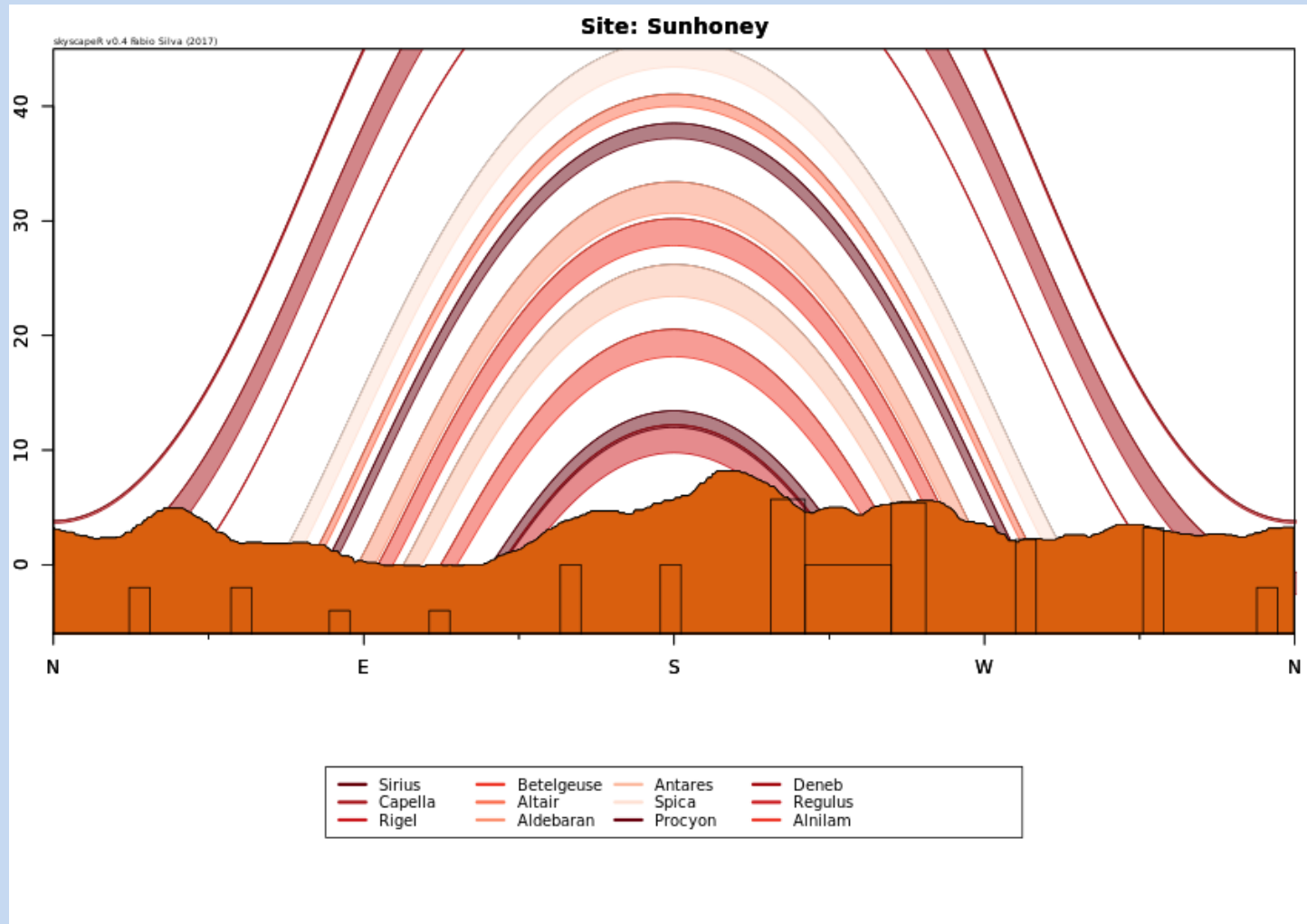
**Stone 11 marking major
standstill setting in NE**

Cross-quarter sunset over recumbent in November 2500 BC – 2000 BC

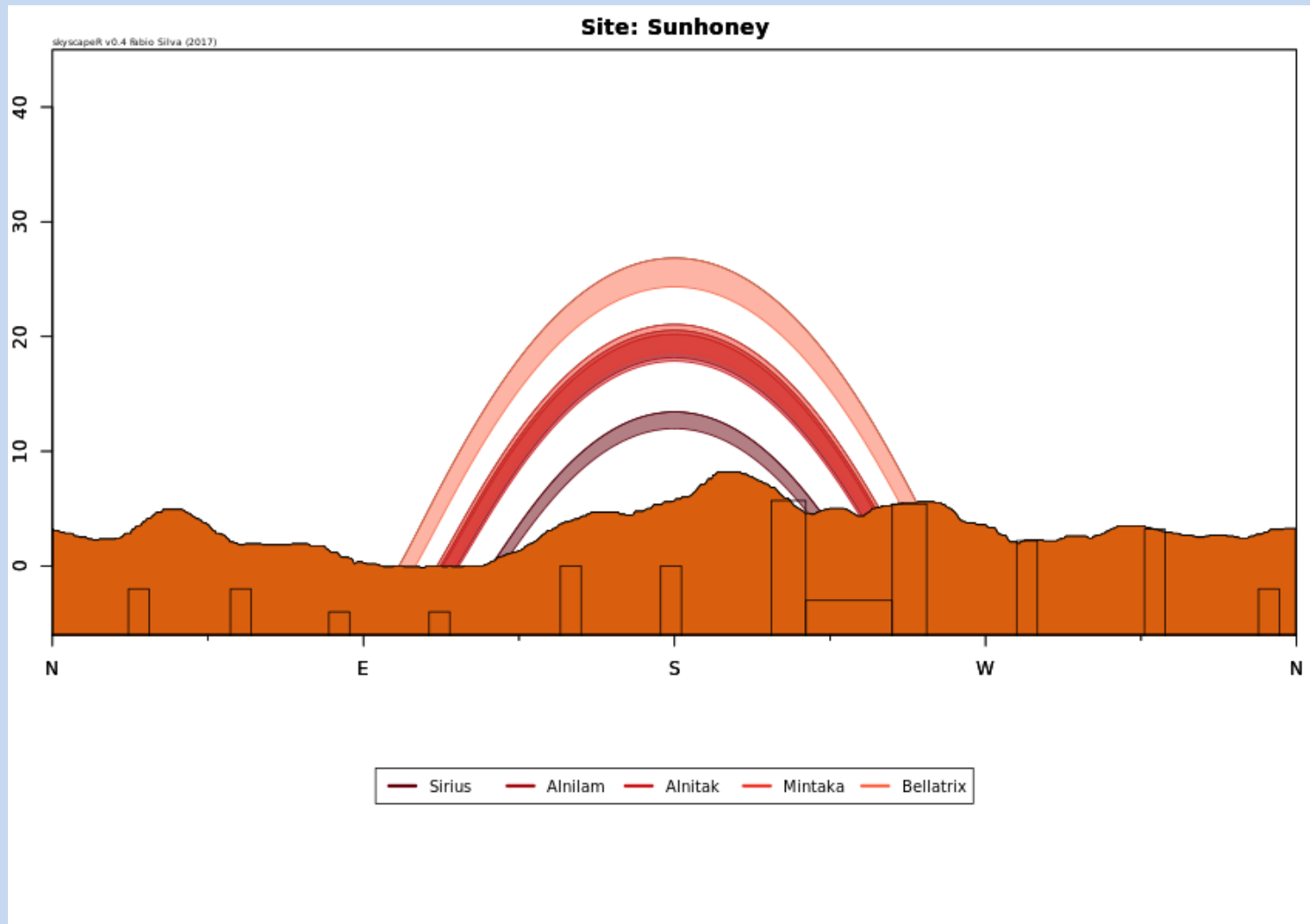


Selection of bright stars at Sunhoney

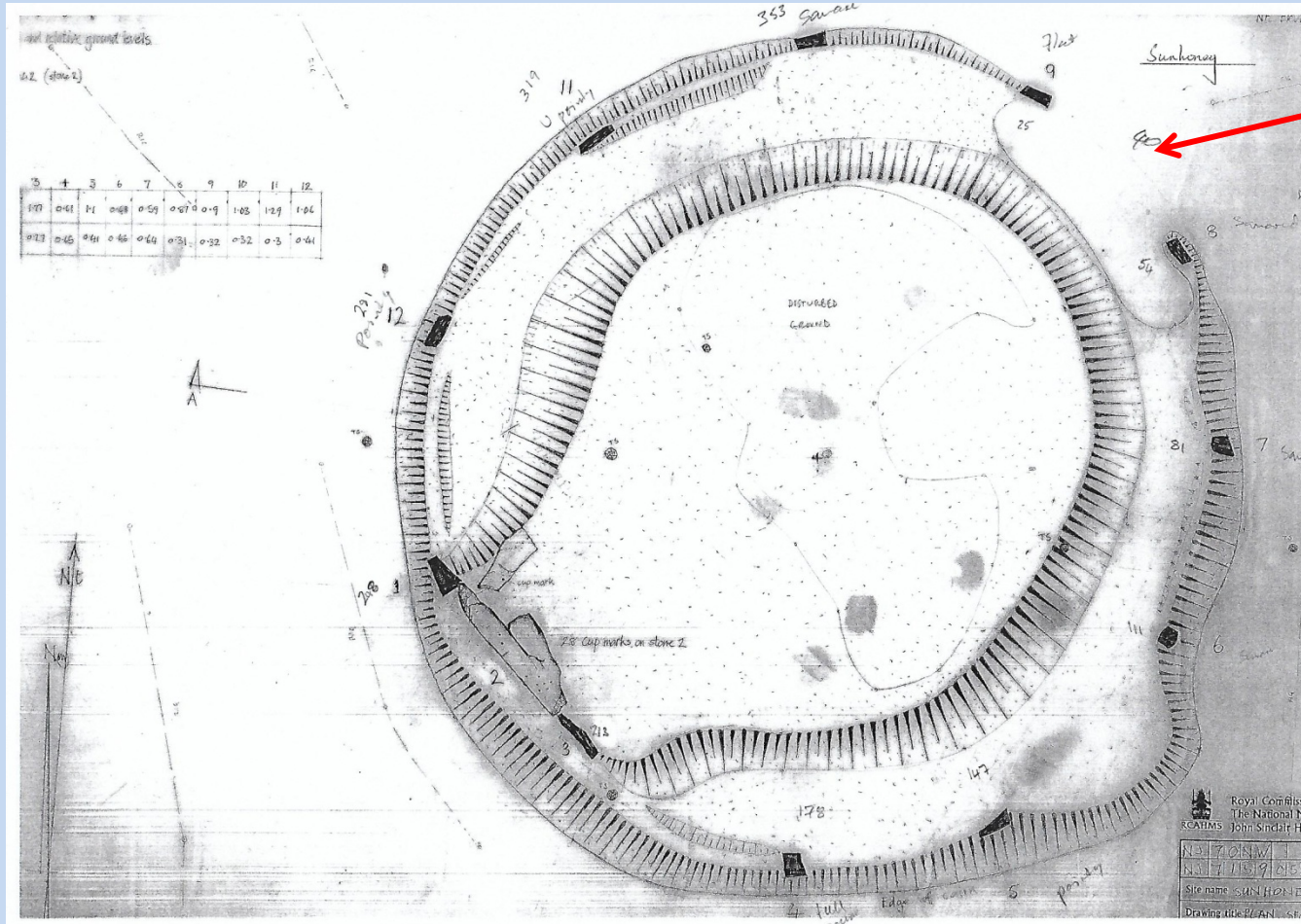
2500 BC – 2000 BC



Fixed stars setting over the recumbent arrangement 2500 BC to 2000 BC

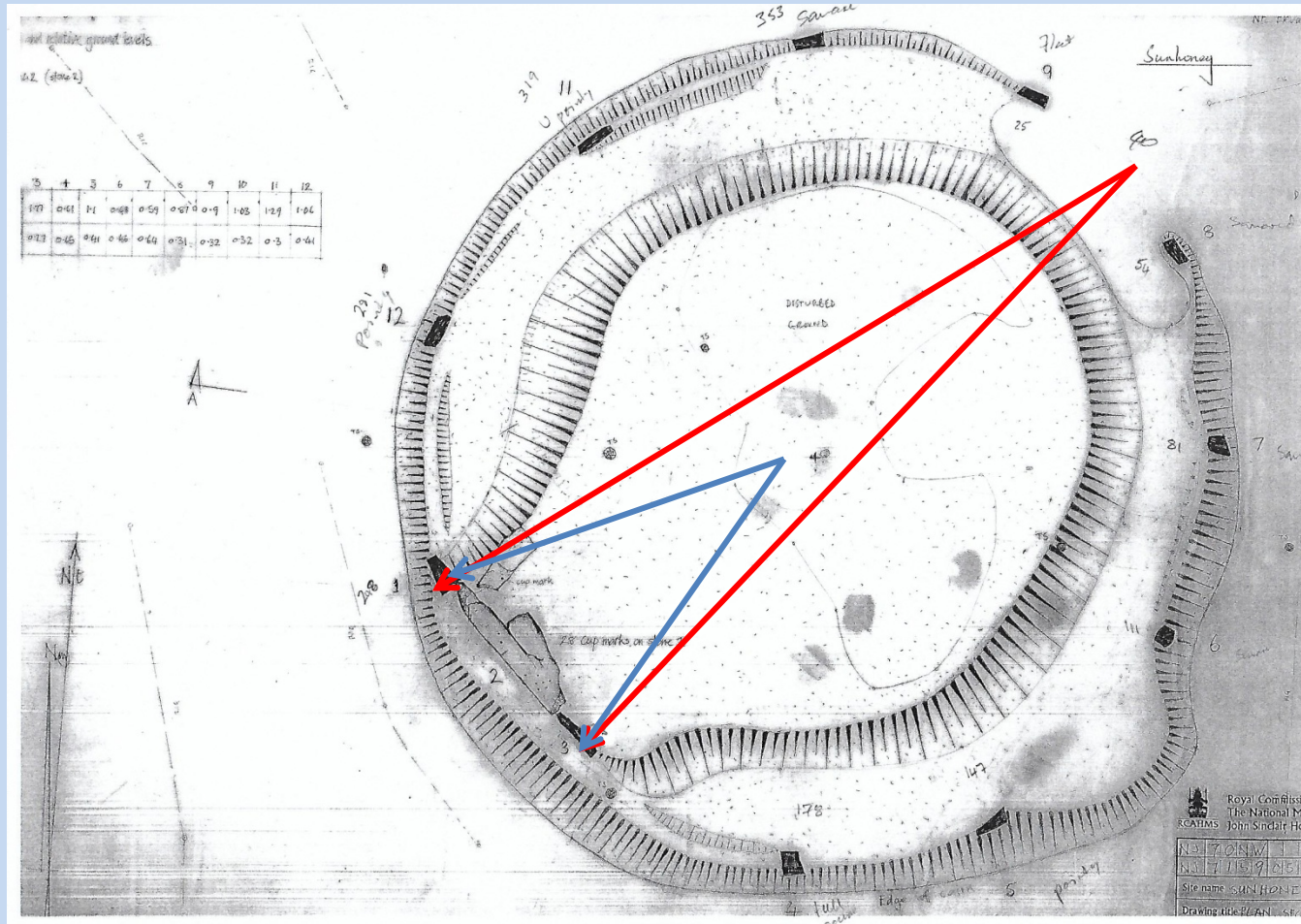


Plan of Sunhoney RSC by Historic Environment Scotland



Gap in surrounding ring cairn between stones 8 and 9

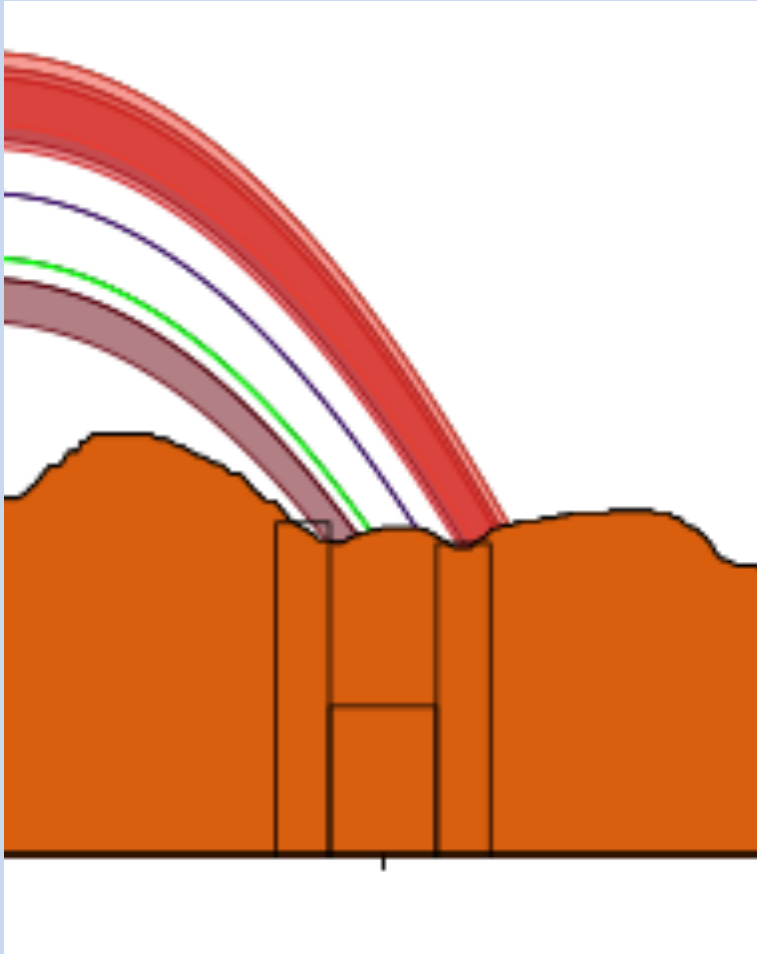
Plan of Sunhoney RSC by Historic Environment Scotland



**18°
window**

**35°
window**

Celestial events as seen through the 18° recumbent window at Sunhoney between 2500 BC – 2000 BC



Setting from left to right

- Sirius
- Minor lunar standstill
- November cross quarter sunset
- Orion's Belt



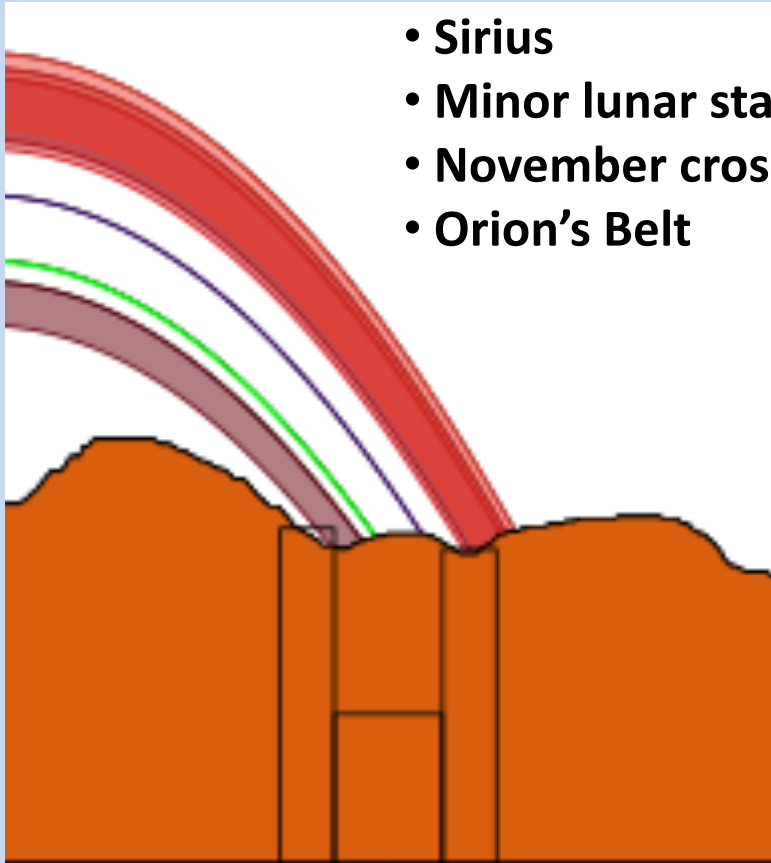
**A comparison of
views through
the recumbent
windows at
Sunhoney and
Tomnaverie**



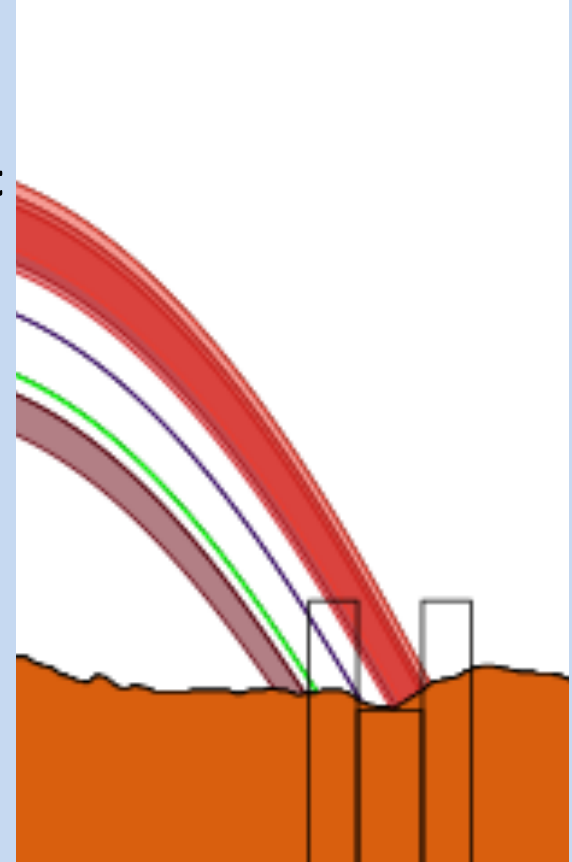
Celestial events as seen through the recumbent windows at Sunhoney and Tomnaverie 2500-2000 BC

Setting from left to right

- Sirius
- Minor lunar standstill
- November cross quarter sunset
- Orion's Belt



Sunhoney
(high horizon)



Tomnaverie
(low horizon)

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