

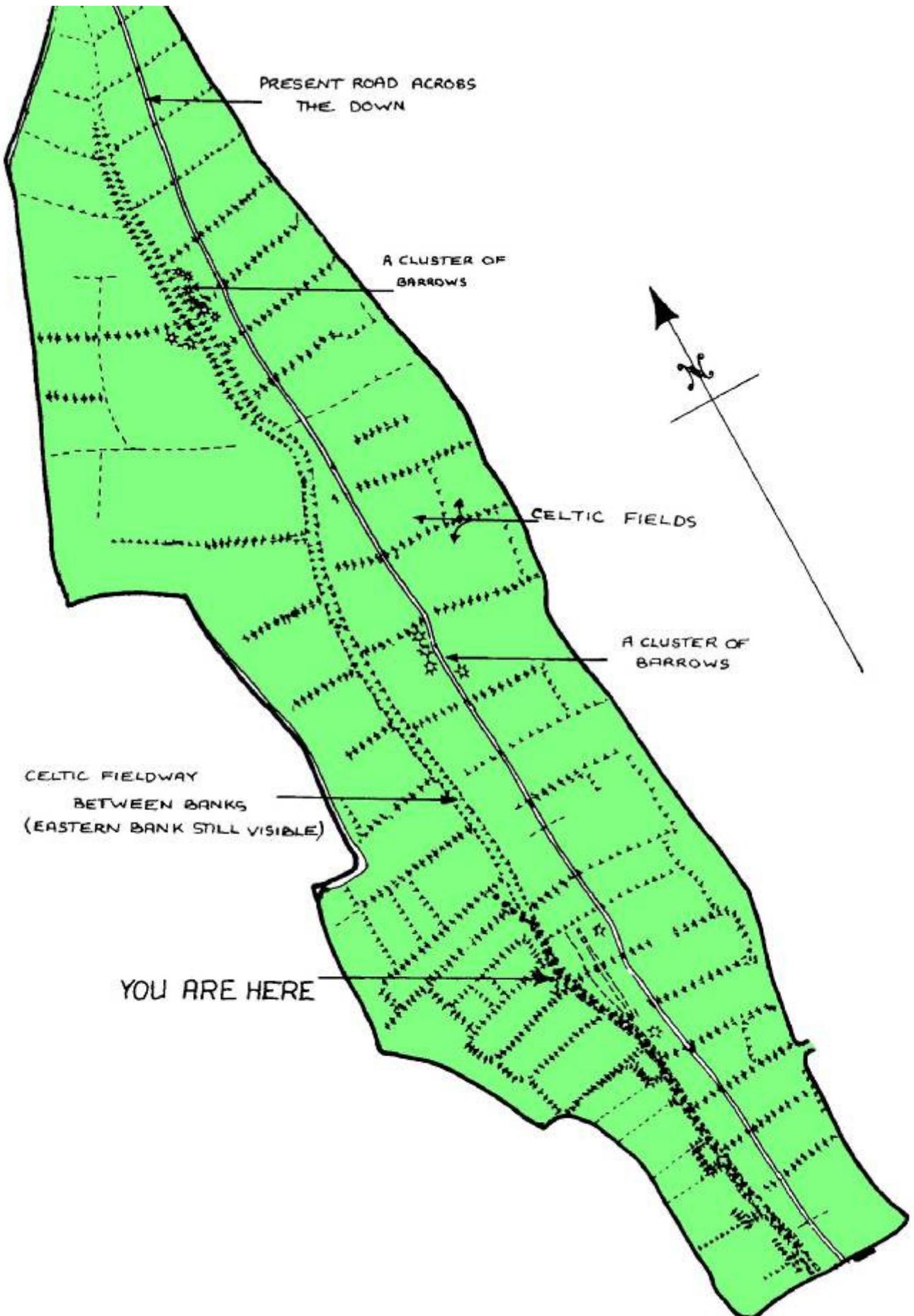
Post 3

IRON AGE FIELD SYSTEM

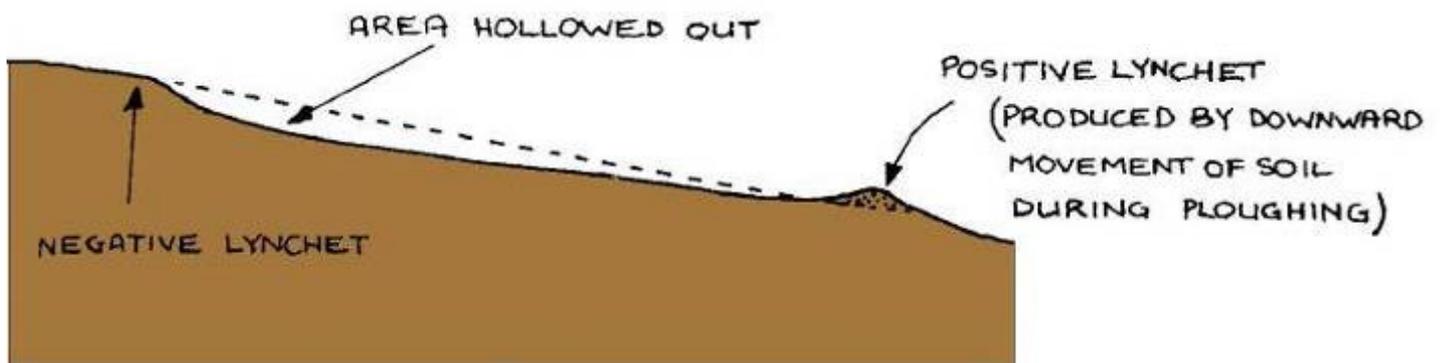
The bank near to the path that you have been walking on dates back to the Iron Age, and was originally part of an ancient track or driveway, produced by the people who farmed Farthing Downs over 2000 years ago.

Other banks found on Farthing Downs are Iron Age field boundaries. The fields were usually less than 2 acres (0.8 hectares) in size, and rectangular in shape, running down both slopes from the track which ran roughly along the summit. The banks were formed by the downward movement of soil following ploughing. This hollowed out some of the material on the slope leaving a

Historical Map of Farthing Downs



'negative lynchet' and accumulated soil at the foot of each field, building up a 'positive lynchet'. If you drove to the start of the trail along the top of Farthing Downs you may have noticed the bumps in the road which are caused by these lynchets.



The thin soils found over the chalk are not very fertile, but the Iron Age people were able to clear the natural vegetation and cultivate these areas using primitive ploughs - merely a crooked piece of wood drawn through the soil by a pair of oxen guided by a ploughman.



Reconstruction of an Iron Age plough in use at the Butser experimental Iron Age farm (Credits Dr Peter Reynolds. © Christine Shaw, Butser Ancient Farm archive)

The Romano-British settlers of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. used the top of the Downs for growing wheat. Their successors, the Saxons, farmed the valley bottoms where, with their improved plough, they could cultivate the deeper, richer soils. The top of the Downs was then abandoned and used only as a cemetery. Since that time Farthing Downs received little or

no cultivation and so the Iron Age field lines can still be seen.

The path to post 4 veers off to the left and after a short distance crosses a positive lynchet. Look for a directional marker.

Pause at this post to admire the view across the valley to Woodplace Farm Fields. These two fields were saved from the threat of development in 2004 after a public appeal led by local residents raised enough money to assist the City of London in purchasing the land.

Head directly down the slope to the hedgerow and post 4 (see map below)

NATURE TRAIL MAP

