

Army Basing Programme - Larkhill

and its potential impact on the

Stonehenge Summer Solstice

Sunrise Alignment

Background

The Secretary of State for Defence announced in March 2013 the Regular Army Basing Programme (ABP). This sets out the future permanent arrangements for the Army as units move back to the UK from Germany and restructures to deliver its future operating model, via the Army 2020 strategic programme.

This includes a concentration of moves in the Salisbury Plain area. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has been liaising closely with Wiltshire Council since mid 2012 on preparing and planning for these moves.

How this may affect Stonehenge

The following pages detail how two of the potential areas for development would - if adopted - result in new buildings being constructed across the Summer Solstice Sunrise alignment as seen from the centre of Stonehenge.

If you, like me, feel that this would amount to an unforgivable encroachment on the World Heritage Site then may I urge you to consider the evidence presented in the rest of this document and **submit your comments before 1st April 2014** using the contact details provided below.

Simon Banton
March 2014

Consultation

Consultation on Masterplan approach including preferred and potential sites for Service Family Accommodation:

• 19th February to 1st April 2014:

6 week Public Consultation including exhibitions (staffed on dates shown) at:

- Amesbury Library (24 Feb & 18 Mar)
- Tidworth Library (25 Feb & 19 Mar)
- Durrington Library (24 Feb & 19 Mar)
- Salisbury Library (25 Feb & 18 Mar)

Comments

Comments during the consultation process can be emailed to DIO-ArmyBasing@mod.uk or posted to:

FREEPOST RTGX-TXYU-AXSL
Army Basing Salisbury Plain
Ropemaker Court
11 Lower Park Row
Bristol BS1 5BN

Army Basing Programme - Larkhill

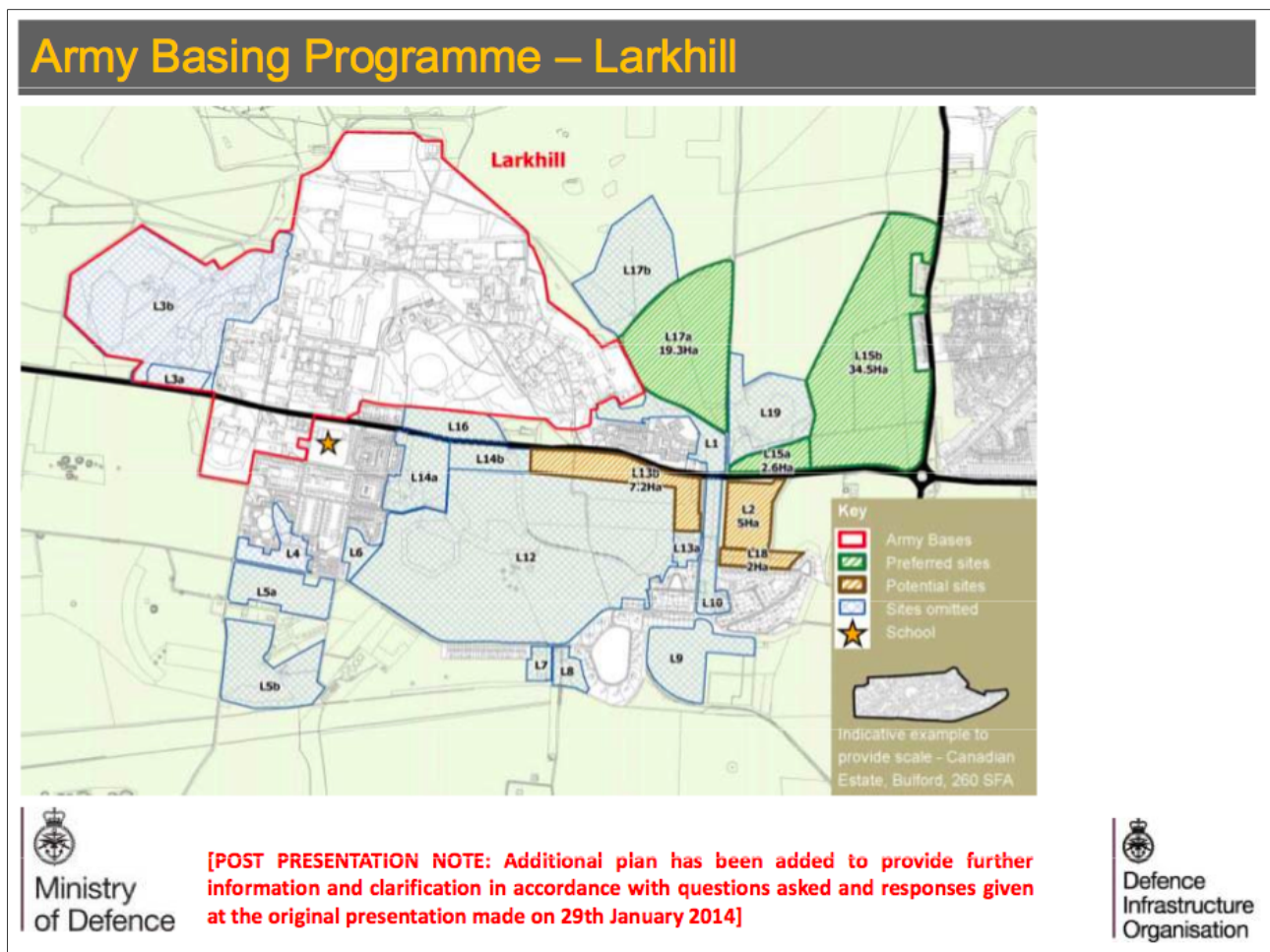
and its potential impact on the Stonehenge Summer Solstice Sunrise Alignment

Simon Banton

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March 2014

The presentation material “[Consulting for a masterplan: stakeholder presentation](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/salisbury-plain-training-area-master-plan-army-basing-programme)” supplied on the Government consultation website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/salisbury-plain-training-area-master-plan-army-basing-programme>) contains within it the following plan indicating the sites under consideration for development.



The “Potential Sites” labelled L2 and L13b lie across the alignment of the Summer Solstice Sunrise as seen from the centre of Stonehenge.

Stonehenge is the focus of a World Heritage Site of enormous cultural importance. It is internationally famous, instantly recognisable and the solstitial alignment of the monument is intrinsic to its original purpose.

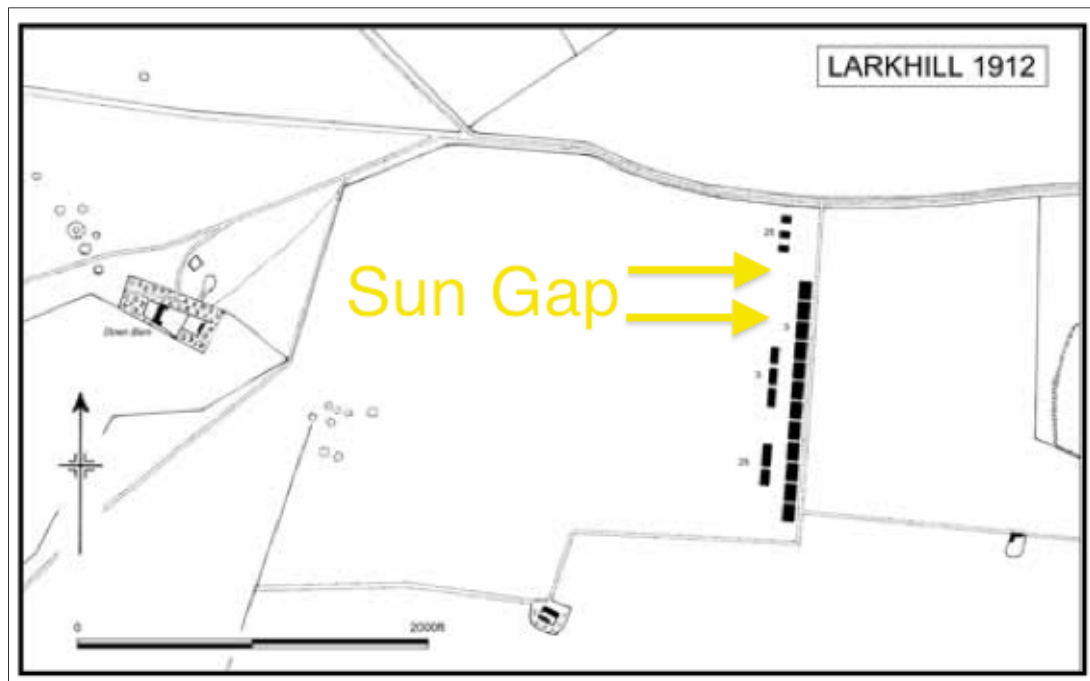
To propose building across this alignment invites a global storm of protest from groups as diverse as heritage bodies, astronomers, prehistorians, UNESCO, religious orders and the wider public.

The MoD needs to demonstrate that it is fully sensitive to the World Heritage Site in order to avoid the potential outrage and reputational damage, not only to itself but also to Britain in the eyes of the world.

When Larkhill Aerodrome was first established in the early 20th Century, a series of aeroplane sheds was built along the east side of Wood Road.

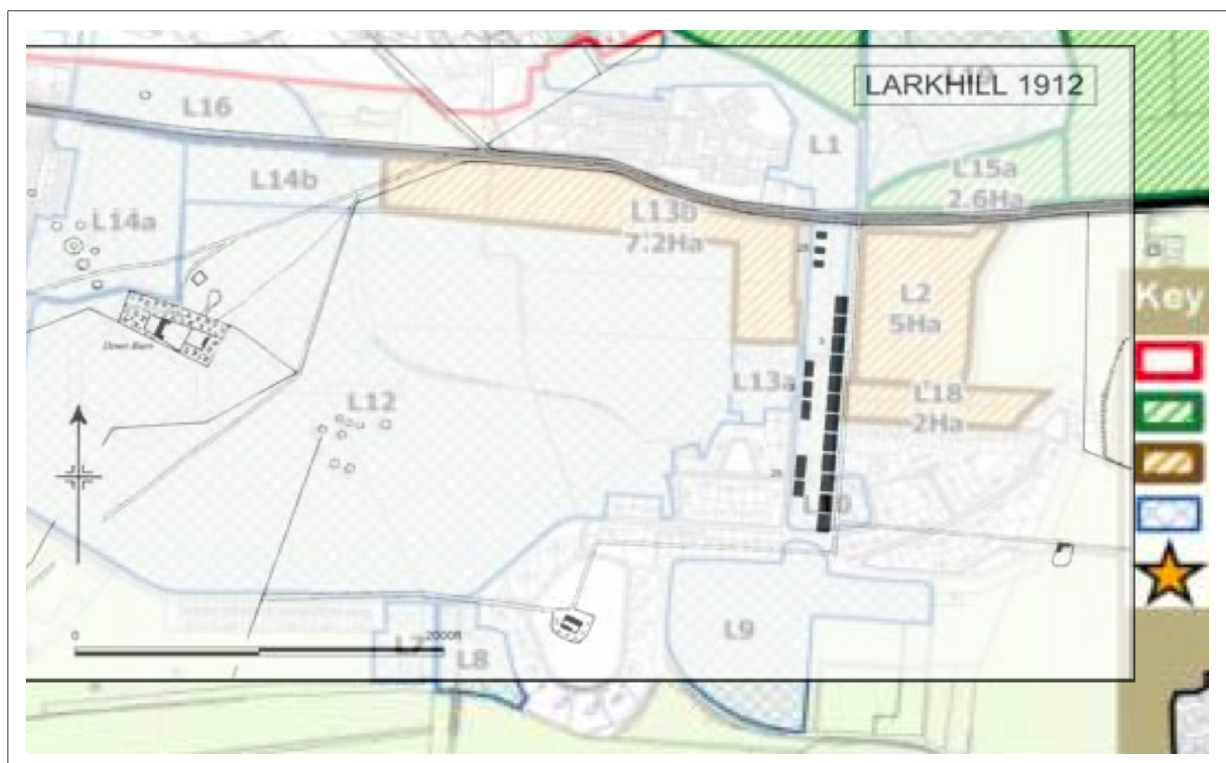
These early military and civilian aviators were keenly aware of their responsibility and so a wide space was deliberately left between the aeroplane sheds at the north end and those further south in order to allow the Summer Solstice Sunrise to continue to shine unobstructed down to Stonehenge.

This space became known as the Sun Gap.

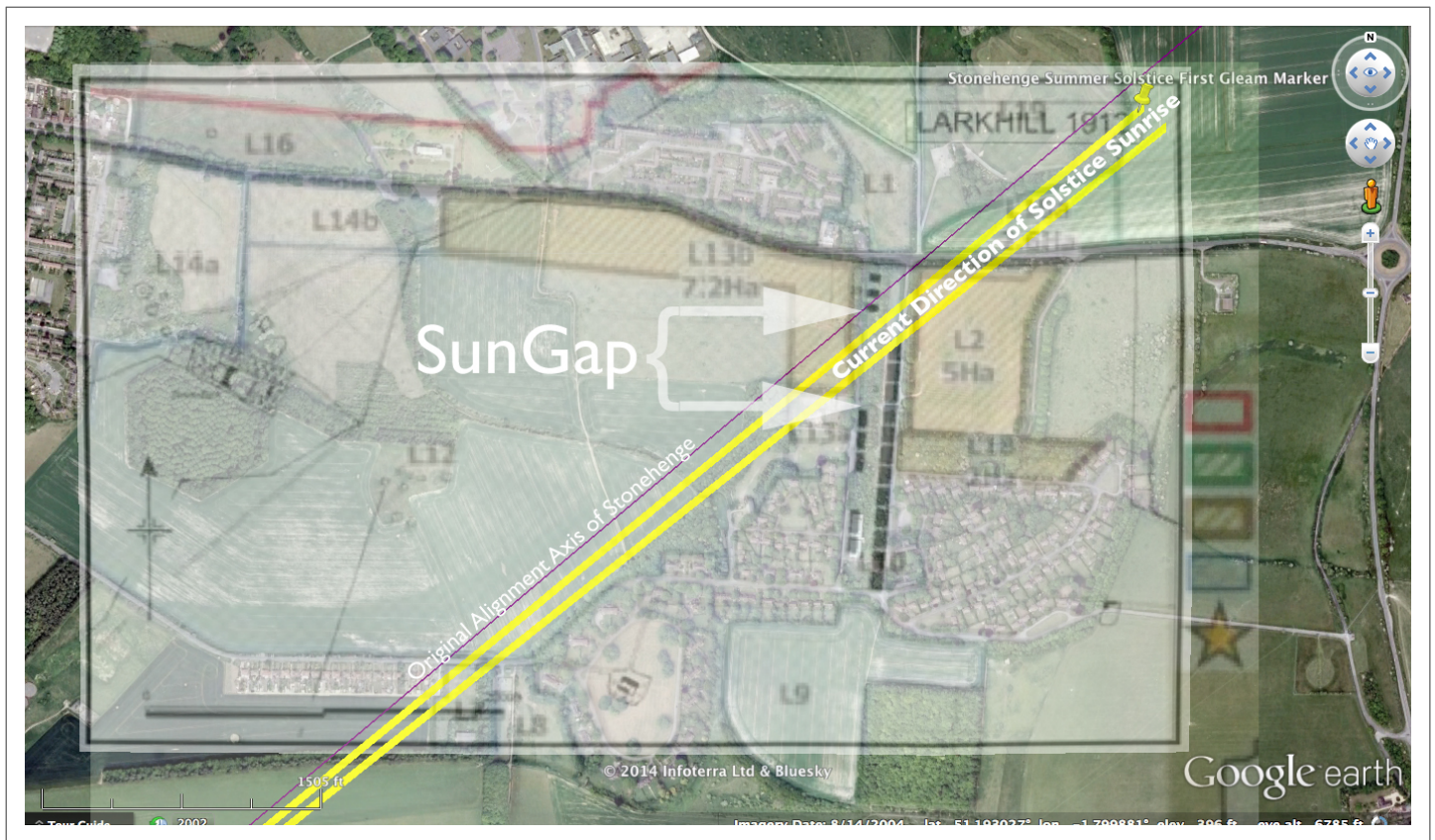


“... There was a deliberate ‘sun gap’ between the civilian and military sheds, left to allow the rising sun’s rays to strike Stonehenge on the summer solstice ...”

Source: Cross and Cockade International, The First World War Aviation Historical Society, Gazetteer of Flying Sites Part 12. Sun Gap annotation by Simon Banton



Overlay of MoD Larkhill Basing Plan and 1912 Map of Larkhill Aeroplane Sheds



Composite showing: Google Earth background overlaid with MoD Larkhill Basing Plan and the 1912 Map of Larkhill Aeroplane Sheds; the original Stonehenge Axis Alignment (purple line) as determined by Sir Norman Lockyer (1902); and the direction of Summer Solstice Sunrise (yellow lines) as seen from Stonehenge in the modern era.

Potential sites L2 and L13b clearly obstruct the Summer Solstice Sunrise alignment.

Although the original Sun Gap is now obstructed by tall trees along Wood Road, Tombs Road and the western edge of the plantation north of Fargo Road, the possibility presently exists that the Summer Solstice Sunrise sightline from Stonehenge to the Larkhill horizon could be fully restored.

This possibility will be entirely removed if the Larkhill Basing Plan sites L2 and L13b are built upon.

The MoD should follow in the honourable tradition of those early military and civilian aviators who recognised and respected the importance of the sightline to Stonehenge and abandon the plans to build across it.

Furthermore, it should take this opportunity to restore the original Summer Solstice Sunrise sightline entirely.

In fact, the current obstructions should never have been permitted in the first place.

In 1970 a Concordat (see Appendix 1) was agreed between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Public Building and Works which stated:

“The Ministry of Defence have a requirement for a School of Artillery at Larkhill for as long as can be foreseen. In addition to the buildings now being erected, this Army Establishment may require further buildings or structures.

However, it is the long term objective of the Ministry of Public Building and Works that **no buildings or large tree plantings should be visible from Stonehenge.**” (emphasis added)

“The Ministry of Defence will take no action which would increase the obtrusion of existing buildings and structures on the landscape as seen from Stonehenge.”

It went on to define a boundary line, south of which nothing over 5m would be permitted and north of which nothing (when not hidden from Stonehenge by land contours) over 9m would be permitted.

Appendix I

Concordat between Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Public Building and Works, 1970

Appendix J – Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Public Buildings and Works Concordat on Future Building Work at Larkhill

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Leatherhead Road
Chessington, Surrey

Tel: 01-397 5266 ext. 2446

A/119/Wilts/600/Q2g(A)

17th February 1970

GCC in C
Southern Command

Sir

STONEHENGE – LARKHILL

1. I am directed to inform you that agreement has now been reached between the Ministry of Public Building and Works and the Ministry of Defence (Army) on the control to be exercised over the development of the area North of STONEHENGE.
2. The principles to be observed governing the erection of any future buildings at LARKHILL are embodied in a Concordat. A copy of the Concordat is attached for your information.
3. In order that there should be no breach of the undertaking given to the MPBW it is essential that the terms of the Concordat should be made known to all authorities exercising responsibilities connected with Works Services or with building development on-land owned by the Army at LARKHILL.
4. If there is any doubt whether any Works or Lands proposal is in conflict with the terms of the Concordat it must be referred back to the appropriate Headquarters for clearance. In particular:
 - a. Proposals for alienation of Army land, or for building development on Army land leased to tenants, must be referred to the MOD(A) DCDL.
 - b. Proposals for Part II or Part III Works Services which might conflict with the terms of the Concordat or in respect of which agreement between the MOD(A) and the MPBW is required by the terms of the Concordat (e.g. buildings to a height in excess of 9 metres North of the building line described at Annexure A to the Concordat) must be referred to the MOD(A) DC.

- c. Any Works or Lands proposals for Part I Works Services, when they are referred to the next Headquarters or to the MOD(A) must bear a reference to the Concordat so that its application is not overlooked.

5. Finally I am directed to request that arrangements should be made for the terms of the Concordat to be brought to the attention of all concerned by the reminder procedures available to Command, District and Garrison Headquarters.

I am, Sir
Your obedient servant
(sgd)
Director of Quartering (Army)

Appendix I (continued)

Concordat between Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Public Building and Works, 1970

CONCORDAT GOVERNING THE LOCATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDING FOR MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AT LARKHILL

(As agreed with MPBW, Ancient Monuments Division)

The Ministry of Defence have a requirement for a School of Artillery at Larkhill for as long as can be foreseen. In addition to the buildings now being erected, this Army Establishment may require further buildings or structures. However, it is the long term objective of the Ministry of Public Building and Works that no buildings or large tree plantings should be visible from Stonehenge. In furtherance of this objective, and to permit any necessary further development of the Army Establishment to be planned without further consultation on this aspect. It is agreed:

- a. On the M of D owned land south of the line described in Annex A (but excluding Durrington Downs Farm where, however, MPBW shall be consulted about the siting and character of any replacements or additions), no new buildings or structures shall be erected except additions to existing buildings; these additions not to exceed 50 sq metres in area and 5 metres in height above ground level. All new building work shall be screened by trees if visible from Stonehenge.
- b. Any proposal for a building of more than 9 metres above ground level to be erected North of the line as described and which would not be completely hidden from

Stonehenge by ground contours shall be the subject of specific agreement between the Departments.

- c. The Ministry of Defence will take no action which would increase the obtrusion of existing buildings and structures on the landscape as seen from Stonehenge.
- d. The Ministry of Defence will take account when considering requirements for new building in the Larkhill area, the effect which such development might have in prolonging the life of existing buildings which are visible from Stonehenge.

ANNEXURE 'A' TO CONCORDAT

BUILDING LINE FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF BUILDING FOR THE MOVE OF MANORBIER

From the limit of MOD property in the WEST the building line follows the Packway to the junction with the pathway to the cricket pavilion (at the Eastern end of the Shopping Centre). Thence, NORTH along this pathway past the Cricket pavilion to the junction with the School of Artillery Officers' Mess approach which it follows NORTH (to the West of the Officers' Mess) to the junction with GLOVER Road. Thence, EAST along GLOVE Road to the junction with the PACKWAY. Thence EAST along the PACKWAY to the junction with WOOD Road. Thence SOUTH along WOOD Road to the junction with POWNALL Road to the MOD Boundary.



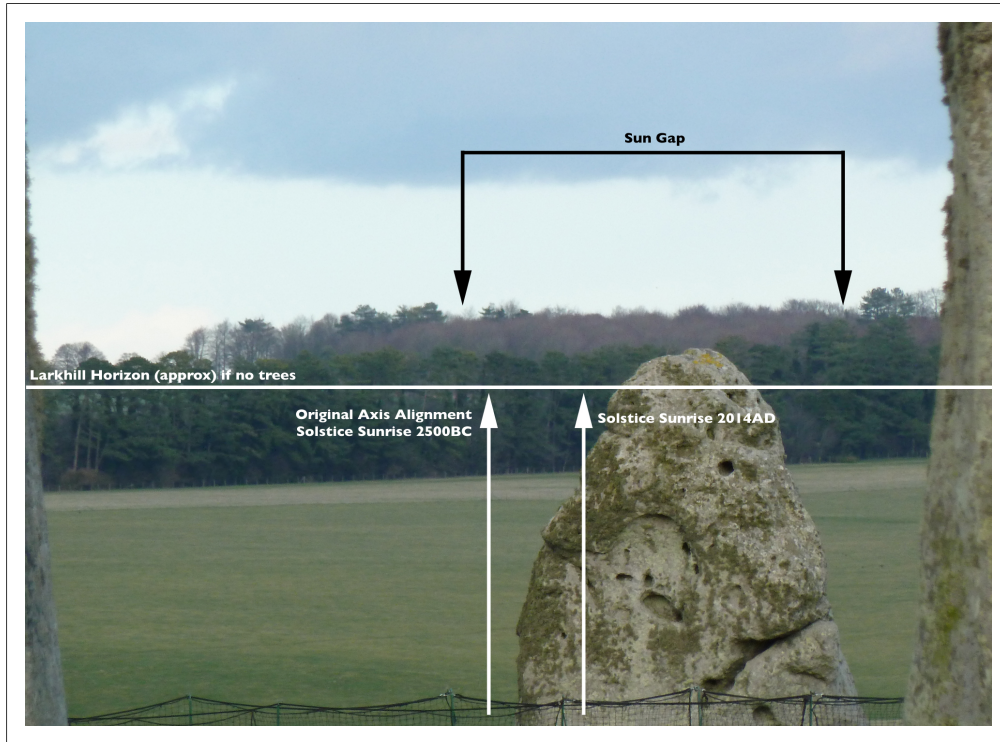
Appendix 2

Illustration and discussion of the present situation due to obstruction of the Summer Solstice Sunrise sightline by tree growth

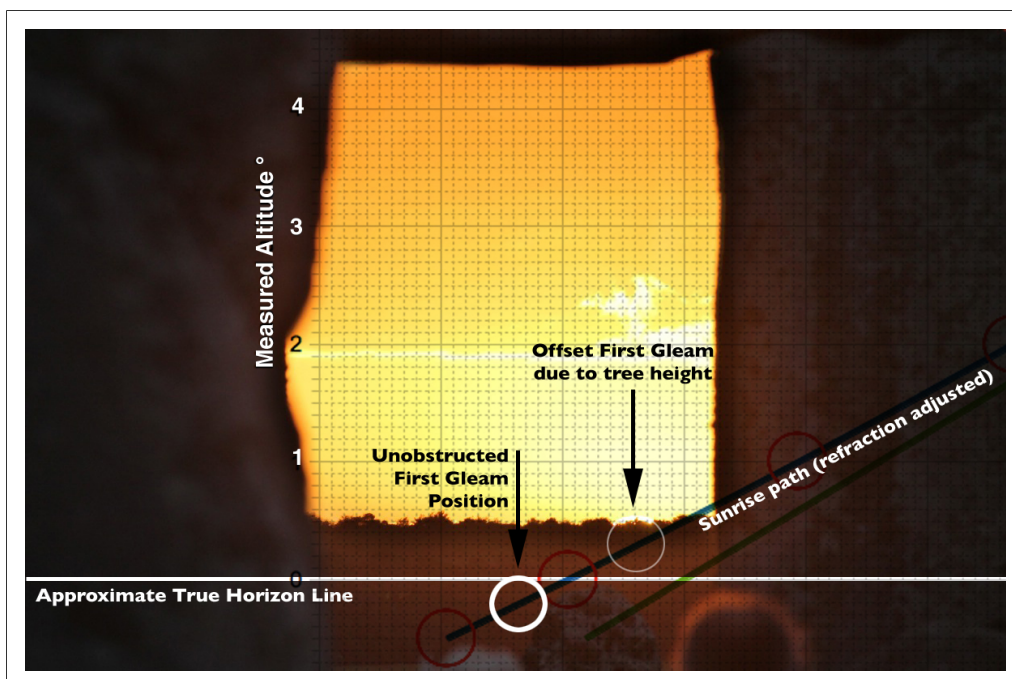
The Sun Gap was originally created in order that the natural horizon would remain unobstructed along a strip some 200 yards long at the highest point on Larkhill in the direction of Summer Solstice Sunrise.

At the time the horizon there was completely bare of trees, allowing “first gleam” of the Sun to be viewed from the centre of Stonehenge, appearing to the left of the tip of the Heelstone as it had done for the preceding 4,500 years.

The height of the obstructing trees that have grown up in the last 50-odd years has the effect of increasing the apparent horizon altitude by approx 0.5°. This displaces sunrise from its intended position so that “first gleam” is now to the right of the Heelstone.



Low angle shot showing original position of “first gleam” on the Axis alignment 2,500BC and where it would be in our era if the trees obstructing the sightline were not there. The approximate span of the original “Sun Gap” is indicated by the black arrowed bracket.



Sunrise on 24th June 2013 showing offset “first gleam” due to tree-obstructed horizon in the direction of the “Sun Gap”