

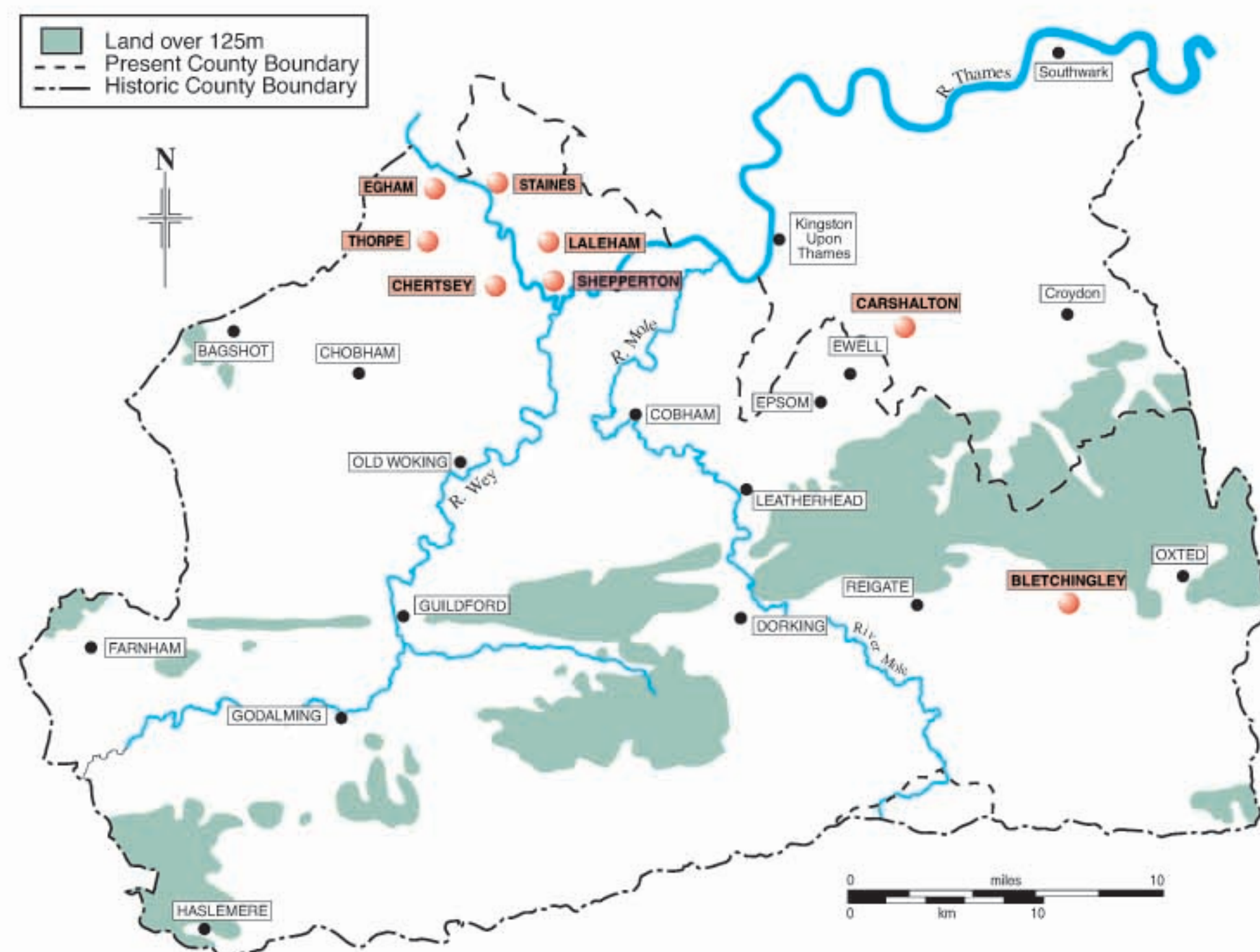
# SETTLING DOWN

2000 BC – 500 BC

## The Transformation of the Landscape by Farming



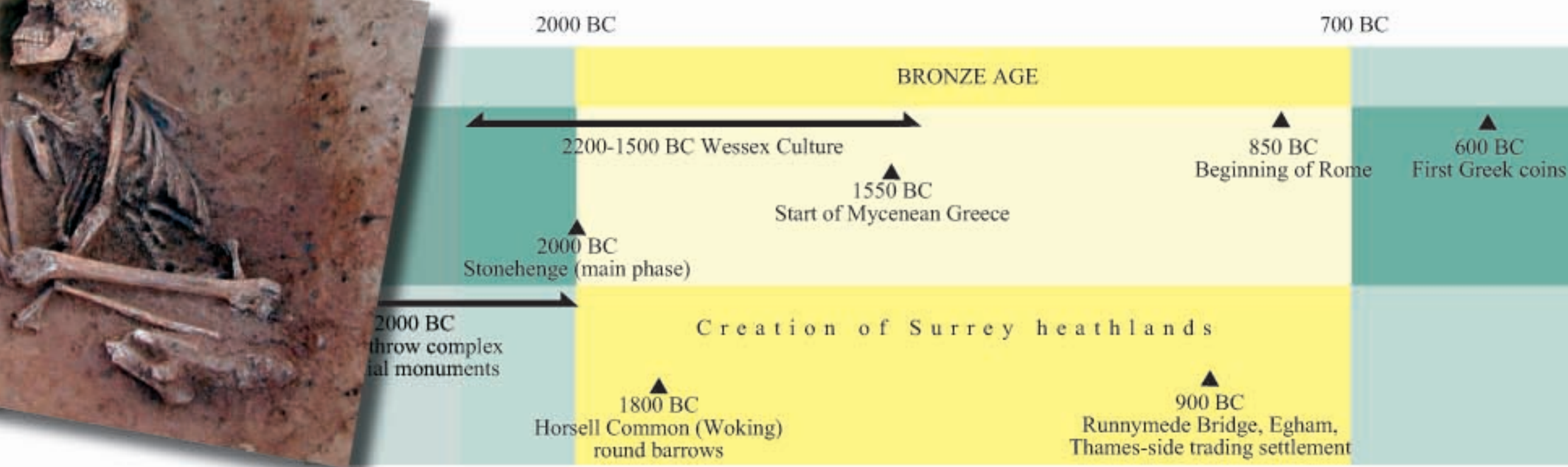
**S**TO NE tools began to be replaced by ones made of bronze towards the end of 3rd millennium. This did not, at first, produce a dramatic change in the daily way of life. The most prominent features of the early Bronze Age are rituals associated with the dead, especially earth mounds or barrows, and veneration of the gods, notably offerings put in watery places.



In the centuries around 1500 BC the landscape of the Thames Valley was transformed by the creation of fields across large areas. Rectangular fields were arranged regularly and linked by trackways. The common occurrence of waterholes in the fields shows that the primary concern was controlling the pasturing of animals. Small farmsteads were dotted around the fields.

This widespread and well organised system implies a high level of control. It is no surprise, then, that larger settlements, or central places, develop at the same time. At Queen Mary's Hospital, Carshalton a circular bank and ditch enclosed a large hilltop settlement. A site at Runnymede Bridge, Egham was protected by its position on an island within the Thames, and wooden landing stages suggest that it was a trading post, controlling the flow of resources and finished products along the river.

The ditches originally dug to mark the fields soon silted up, but hedgerows continued to define their limits, and they endured in many cases until the time of the Roman conquest. Meanwhile there was much change in the location of farmsteads, and waterholes were frequently renewed. The new technology of iron working developed around 750 BC, but, as with bronze, does not seem to have brought about immediate changes in society. A notable feature of the landscape at this time, however, was the appearance of the first hillforts, such as that at St Ann's Hill, Chertsey.



- 1, 2 The circular ditch of an early Bronze Age barrow under excavation near Thorpe (1). A crouched burial (2) was found in the base of the ditch
- 3, 4 The ditches of a Bronze Age field system, as revealed in a quarry near Staines (3). The appearance of such fields, in the valley of the River Wandale, is shown in the artist's impression of a stronghold near Carshalton (4)
- 5, 6 A waterhole in one of the Bronze Age fields found in a quarry near Laleham (5). Nearby the post holes of a post-built round house, with a substantial porch, were a rare discovery (6)
- 7 A Bronze Age bowl made from maple wood found near, Addlestone. This is an extremely rare survival of a wooden domestic item which must have been very common at the time
- 8 The absence of Bronze Age fields outside the main river valleys does not mean that other areas were deserted. These cremation urns from near Bletchingley reveal the presence of people, perhaps engaged in more nomadic types of farming
- 9 St Ann's Hill, Chertsey rises abruptly from the valley below. In the Iron Age the hillfort at its summit would have dominated and controlled settlement in the region.

