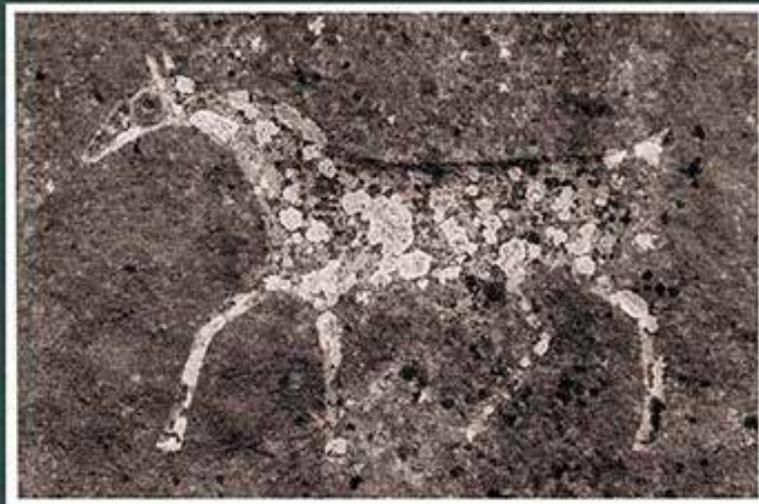


Chalk Hills
White Horses



Angus Haywood

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Chalk Hills White Horses

White Horse and Hill Figure Ages

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The White Horse of Uffington - 1000 BC

The Long Man of Wilmington - 17th Century

The Cerne Abbas Giant - 17th Century

The Westbury Horse - 1778

The Cherhill White Horse - 1780

The White Horse of Osmington - 1808

The Alton Barnes White Horse - 1812

The Hackpen Hill Horse - 1838

The Fovant Badges - 1916

The Lenham Cross - 1922

The Litlington White Horse - 1924

The Pewsey Horse - 1937

The Folkestone White Horse - 2003

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Introduction

A surprise to find the words when photographing the White Horses and Hill figures in southern England...

Leucipotomy, *noun*, the art of carving white horses on chalk upland areas.
From the Greek, *Leuci* - white, *hippo* - horse, *tomy* - the cutting or excising of.
Gigantotomy, *noun*, the carving of hill figures.

The craft is far more ancient than the Greek culture that gave the words.

The White Horses and Hill figures are never quite on their own. Whatever the season someone in our landscape will be aware of one in the corner of their eye, perhaps in the far distance through the window of their cottage, above or below them when walking downland and upland, or looming over them from the other side of the valley. Like many, they first came into my own conscious when young, in Dorset, intermittently glimpsing the Fovant Badges or the Cerne Abbas Giant framed through the glass of the family car as we skimmed past the flickering hedgerows and trees, or suddenly ahead, after the curve in a road, in stark view.

Becoming familiar again with them through photography, their individualism within their own landscapes separates them clearly for me. Climbing up and leaning into their slopes each week, their positions showed me they were certainly chosen for their drama, the focus in the bowl of a hill range, the steepest convex of a hillside, or the crown facing skywards on open Downs. Stretching up, treading around closely, up and down their steep-terraced slopes, an appreciation is given of their physicality. It is like peering up close to a gallery painting, to study the artist's brush strokes through the oil-thick paint, the texture of the underlying canvas board, the pin nails and joints of the surrounding wood frame. As with linocuts, engravings, woodcuts, charcoal drawings, and oils, the Hill figure artworks have variety in their media. Bright white chalk, tamped into grass turf trenches, or grey gravel, or smoothed concrete, or laid white tiles, and their wood plank battens staked in around them, holding back the earth to keep their edges sharp.

Treading up close to the figures they are curious in their gigantism. The turf cut and the earth dug, the shovelled tonnes of chalk, stone, or cement, their place set in the larger landscape and sky. They seem to me to express human labour, a communal agreement of effort over the centuries to create and maintain. Villagers and farmers, soldiers, housewives and children, academics and artists, friends. Recent archaeologists have found The White Horse of Uffington's minimalist curves and trenches have been continually scoured and tended by communities across its whole 3000 years.

For all the White Horses and Hill figures there must have been artistic minds too who, like

sculptors or painters, would need to step back from their work maybe a mile or more, then autocratically direct or democratically agree their artistic opinion with the stake and spade-holders, a bolder line to the left, or more chalk laid to the right. They would have had to stride or scramble across the landscape as photographers will, to feel confidence in the new Hill figure from all their viewpoints. Perhaps there were temptations and rushes for final artistic corrections before the labour left to move away down the hills.

This book of impressions is a spring and summer book. From Dorset to Oxfordshire, Wiltshire to Kent, the catching of the morning or evening light was chosen ahead or behind moving fronts of weather. There was a fresh lushness in the landscape. A winter book would bring out a different black and white character in the landscapes of the Hill figures, bleaker uplands, harder textures, longer shadows across buttressed slopes, barer fields and silhouetted trees, different patinations.

In summer though, as I stood and paused on the many chalk hills, my imagination's ear was always playing Vaughan Williams' 'The Lark Ascending', encouraged by the ridge-soaring birds, downland grass, and expanding skies. I mostly had the hills and figures to myself; too early in the mornings for most or, in the evenings, as others left to head back down for meals and pints. Some had a trickle of arrivals and departures, a child or dog leaping and running ahead of their family, or couples in the deep grass breathing in the sky and vista together, or walkers briefly halting enroute to their next summit. But the Hill figures can soon return to places of peace again. The billowing, warm, summer winds across them quickly muffle and carry away the visitors' conversations and calls to each other, as they continue further along the white paths or step away out of sight down the hill slopes.

A map of their locations could have been included here. There are many more than photographed. But it is more rewarding to discover them by chance on a journey, in the context of their landscapes, or search for them instead on a diversion while on foot or in car, knowing you are close - like finding the mouse in a Terence Cuneo painting. All are reachable after short walks from below, across, or from above, yet most of the best perspectives can take more time to find, much further out, and down harder found country lanes and tracks.

Once you are there in the hills I hope you sense the same as myself. The shapes of the folding and undulating hills and Downs are the same as millennia before. You might feel too, if they were nearby on the hillside leaning on spades and hoes, you could freely go over to join in conversation with the makers from centuries ago, to ask how it's going, how much longer, good luck. A chance to chew the cud on the grass terraced hillside. I hope also you might sense, in the choice of artwork in this book, the continuum from artists. A curiosity and feel for the deep relationship of horse, man, woman, and nature, within the English landscape.

Angus Haywood

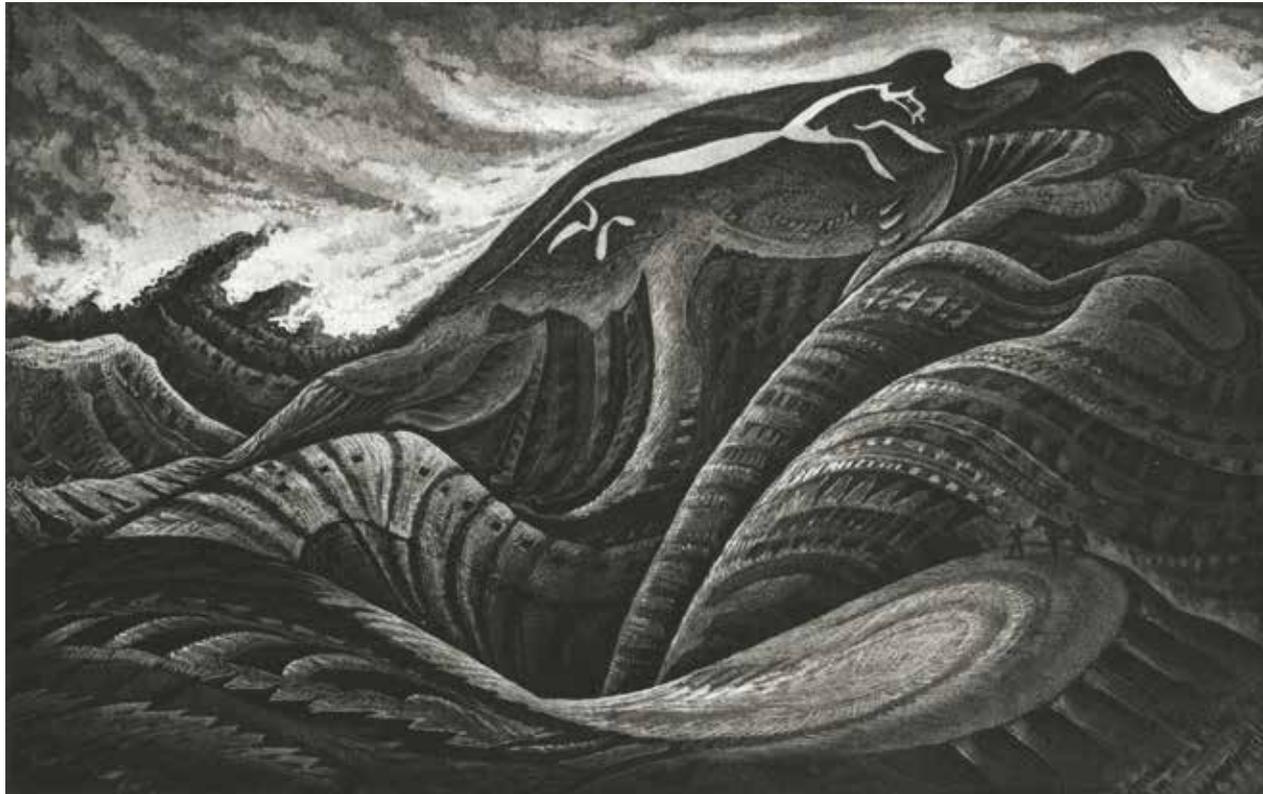


The White Horse of Uffington

Oxfordshire, England



~ 3,000 years skywards, the arcing curves of Bronze age art ~



The White Horse of Uffington, Study I, Oxfordshire



The White Horse of Uffington, Study II, Oxfordshire

The Long Man of Wilmington

The South Downs, East Sussex, England

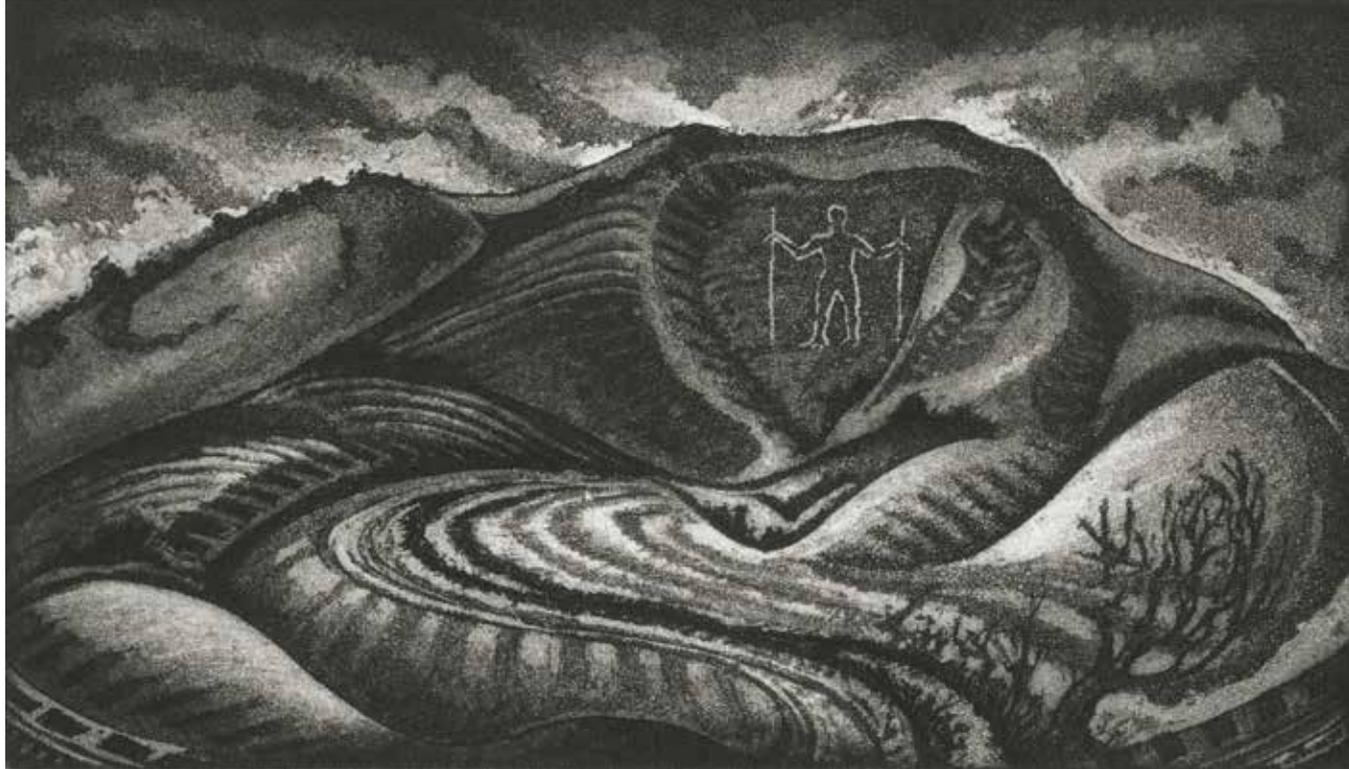


~ *The quiet sentinel* ~



The Long Man of Wilmington, Study I, East Sussex





The Long Man of Wilmington, Study II, East Sussex

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Acknowledgements

The artwork placed within this book often started as colour originals. I would like to give my grateful thanks to all the contributing artists I contacted who were generous and positive enough to send in files of their artwork and allow to be reproduced in black and white. In particular I would like to thank equine artist Jo Richardson for producing her commissions in many media on my visits to her country studio in Hampshire. I hope readers will take time to go through the artists' individual websites included in the 'List of Illustrations' for those artworks that appeal most to them.

Thanks is also owed to my Swedish companion this year, 'Helga', my Hasselblad 503cx medium-format 6x6 film camera; and her close German cousins, the Zeiss lenses of 50mm, 80mm, 150mm, and 250mm. To Dan Bernard of 131 Design, Old Portsmouth, for all the specialist darkroom printing and digitising of the Ilford FP4 film negatives. To Raphilena Bernard for drafting all the Hill figure artwork illustrations. And to Keith Lyons and David Champion of B&W Basement, St John's Wood, London, for the enjoyable hours of developing, enlarging, and thinking in black and white.

Author

Angus Haywood currently lives beside the water near Portsmouth, Hampshire, in England. He grew up in Sherborne, Dorset. His interest in black & white photography began in the 1980's, and has been influenced by the work of Fay Godwin, Michael Kenna, and others. He has been an airline pilot flying in Britain and Europe, and recently finished eight years in Saudi Arabia, operating across the whole of the Middle-East and into Africa. The book was conceived when missing the colour green of England, while sitting amongst the air-conditioning units and satellite dishes of his scorched, dusty roof on the Riyadh skyline. He looks forward to other photography projects.