Shape-shifting: THE CHANGING OUTLINE OF THE LONG MAN OF WILMINGTON

by Rodney Castleden

The Long Man of Wilmington (NGR TQ 542034) is a modern construction of concrete blocks marking the site of a hill figure of uncertain origin and uncertain shape. This article reviews the modern history of the constructed outline and its relationship with the unencumbered hill figure that existed on the site until 1873. The results of resistivity surveys undertaken by Gravett in 1969 and the present author in 1996–97 are used to try to resolve some of the problems in reconstructing the shape of the Long Man before the 1873–74 bricking.

THE BRICK AND CONCRETE OUTLINES

The concrete blocks that make up the figure of the Long Man were placed on Windover Hill in 1969, creating an image 70 m tall that is less than half a century old. Until recently (Bellam 1990) it was assumed that the block outline coincided with the brick outline made in 1891–92 and that that coincided with a still earlier outline made in 1873–74. The authenticity of the present outline, the latest image in the succession, has been questioned intermittently, e.g. by Marples 1949, Holden 1971, Castleden 1983, Bellam 1990, Farrant 1993 and 1995, establishing that the ‘restorations’ were inaccurate at certain points but without arriving at a well-defined overall image of the figure prior to 1873. This paper evaluates the evidence for some of the changes to the outline, with a view to attempting a paper reconstruction of the Long Man as he was before 1873.

The original 1873–74 yellow brick outline, which was loosely embedded in the turf, suffered serious damage from vandals over the following 15 years. The vicar of Wilmington, the Revd Dearsley, reported that ‘the bricks have been dislodged from nearly a half of the figure, down to the waist’. He described the damage as having been done ‘in a wholesale fashion, as a walking stick, or any other handy means for dislodgement, would start one brick after another in easy and rapid succession and soon push away to the foot of the hill a thousand of them. In this way nearly the whole of the upper half of the Giant has been stripped of its brick outline.’ Later he referred to ‘the many gaps in the outline’ (SAS Library Holden Papers). Unfortunately, Dearsley was not specific about the locations of the gaps, except for one comment that ‘the outline of the Crown of the head [was] much effaced’. His description implies that continuous lines of bricks, and a great many bricks at that, were missing. Substantial sections of the upper outline would therefore appear to have been re-created when the figure was repaired in 1891–92 with white bricks. Many of these too were to be thrown down the hill by ‘excursionists’; hence the cementing of loose bricks into position, a practice that seems to have begun after 1925, when ownership of the figure was transferred to the Sussex Archaeological Trust, and their eventual replacement, in 1969, by bigger and heavier cement blocks.

The 1873–74 bricking was the brainchild of the vicar of Glynde, the Revd W. de St Croix. According to de St Croix’s own account (1875) this was prompted by a talk given by John Phené to the Royal Institute of British Architects in May 1873 (Phené 1872). In the summer of 1873 de St Croix decided that the Giant had to be remade or it would be lost altogether, and in August launched an appeal for funding. The Duke of Devonshire owned the site, but appears not to have visited Sussex to evaluate de St Croix’s scheme for himself; he sanctioned it from afar and agreed to pay a substantial sum towards the remaking of the Giant.

The Long Man was not only grassed over; he had been grassed over for at least 160 years, so his elusiveness was not a recent development. The lower half of the figure was particularly difficult to make out; presumably because of soil creep and the natural tendency for the soil to accumulate on the lower part of the slope, the slight depressions marking the Giant’s lower legs and the lower ends of his staves were vanishing under a slowly rising tide of soil and grass. De St Croix’s initial intention was to recut the figure down to the chalk bedrock, as stated on a
slip requesting half-crown donations; ‘The Wilmington Giant — A desire exists to lay bare to the chalk this gigantic figure.’ This plan had to be modified because the unexpected depth of soil encountered in trial excavations made exposing the solid chalk too difficult.

A marker outline made of 7000 whitewashed yellow bricks resting on the grass outline had to suffice. It was hardly a restoration, yet with surprising speed the 1874 brick image came to be regarded as definitive. Its replacement still is. But at the time of the ‘restoration’, in spite of the enthusiasm and undoubted good intentions of the restorers, many people were sure it was wrong. Some had liked the subtlety of the turf image and felt that the bricking spoilt it aesthetically. Some could remember the turf image and knew that the bricks had been wrongly positioned.

THE BRICK AND CONCRETE OUTLINES CHALLENGED

EYE-WITNESSES AND OBJECTIONS
Eye-witnesses who knew what the figure had looked like before 1873 were convinced that mistakes had been made. It was possible for people to disagree on the matter because the figure had been a turf image for longer than anyone could remember; it was often invisible and when visible it was ill-defined. The Rowley drawing of 1710 (Fig. 1A) is entirely in dashed lines, implying an indistinct grass outline rather than a clear chalk outline (Farrant 1993). William Burrell’s notes make it plain that it was in the same condition when he saw it in 1781 (Fig. 1B); ‘The Spot being covered with grass may be plainly discovered in Summer by the colour of the Grass.’ Royer’s 1787 guidebook describes the Giant as the ‘figure of a man, eighty yards in length, which, by the different shades of grass, each hand appears to grasp a staff (sic.).’ Around 1800, the figure was known locally as the Green Man (Parish 1873). In 1835, ‘The figure of a man 240 ft in height may occasionally be seen by a remarkable difference in the verdure’ (Horsfield 1835, 326). The figure was described in similar terms 16 years later (Figs 2B & 3) (Cooper 1851). The Long Man was a grassed-over figure in 1710, 1781, 1800, 1835, 1851 and the early 1870s and there is no hint in any of the accounts that it was recut in between these dates, nor is there any surviving local tradition of scourings.

The design settled on by de St Croix and the small committee steering the restoration project in 1873–74 is broadly the one we see on the hillside today. A certain amount of evidence, not always first-hand, was circulated in succeeding decades suggesting that the design was faulty. A letter to The Bazaar magazine in 1931 (S. G. H. 1931) is representative. It contains a brief reference to incorrect bricking. ‘From cottagers nearby I rather gather that the figure had been somewhat altered.
in the process [of bricking], and that the whole or part of one of the staves had been added.' The Graphic drawing (Figs 4 & 5A) showing the Long Man immediately before the bricking and published on 7 February, 1874, to an extent corroborates this; the lowest quarter of each of the staves was no longer visible by 1873, and in 1873–74 the staves were extended back down to the level of the feet, much as shown in the Rowley, Burrell and Powell drawings.

At least three credible eyewitnesses are on record as having seen the turf Giant 'standing on his toes' (Holden 1971, 48–9). In 1912 the Revd Bunston gave a lecture in which he mentioned that the feet had been altered during the 1874 bricking. ‘Originally the feet pointed downwards in the line of the form’ (Bunston 1912). By this he seems to have meant that the feet continued down the slope in the same direction as the legs.

Ann Downs (1840–1928) lived at Wilmington Priory as a girl, and from there she watched the Giant’s outline coming and going in the changing light. When in her eighties, she was sure the bricking had been done incorrectly; ‘The feet have been altered.’ The feet were originally splayed and pointing down the hillside; ‘formerly the Giant appeared to be coming down the hill’ (‘Octogenarian’, writing to The Herald Magazine 10 November 1923, 4; Shoosmith 1938). F. W. de St Croix, grandson of the Revd de St Croix, wrote in 1972, ‘I am sure my grandfather would not have altered the left foot (and lower part of the leg); but from your [Eric Holden’s] papers it appears that it was anybody’s guess as to the position, the outline, if any, being so faint.’ De St Croix went on to criticize Mrs Downs for not speaking out at the time of the bricking (Holden Papers, letter from F. W. de St Croix dated 17 February 1972).

In 1900 the third witness, Dr T. C. Woodman,
wrote that the Long Man had ‘undergone a most deplorable restoration some twenty years ago ... The feet of the figure have been quite altered, now they are turned sideways, formerly they were foreshortened, and the form was coming straight forward’ (Woodman 1900).

Both feet were incorrectly bricked. In other parts of the figure, the bricks may have been placed very close to the original outline, which they now obscure. Displacements sideways of half a metre would be hard to detect on the hillside and hard to check against a remembered image, yet alter the character of the drawing significantly. Professor Ian Dimbleby of the Institute of Archaeology was close to the truth when he wrote to Holden in 1969, ‘I should think that the installation [of the brick outline] must have obliterated any evidence of the first delineation of the figure’ (Holden papers, letter from Dimbleby dated 7 August 1969).

Co-opted onto the restoration project was John Phené, who had carried out more research on the Long Man than de St Croix and did not share de St Croix’s enthusiasm for the bricks or the design. When Phené addressed the AGM of the Sussex Archaeological Society at Wilmington Priory in October 1874 (Eastbourne Gazette, 21 October 1874), his remarks were ambivalent. He admitted that he had at first disagreed with de St Croix’s design but that ‘after a careful comparison of the figure with that in Dorsetshire’ he had changed his mind. ‘His own opinions of the original design were not at first as positive as at present, although now found they were quite correct’, because of analogies with the Cerne Giant. Phené’s first thought was right and, if he had been steadfast in opposing de St Croix’s design, we might have inherited a more authentic and dramatic image. It is difficult to understand Phené’s reasoning; the Long Man and the Cerne Giant are so dissimilar in so many other ways that there is no reason to expect the feet to be the same. Phené’s equivocation was peculiar, but he was not alone in disliking the bricks. George Birdwood wrote to the Westminster Gazette in 1893, ‘It is a pity this restoration [the 1873–74 bricking, not the 1891–92 re-bricking reported the previous day] was ever perpetrated, for the figure was always clear enough on account of the different texture of the grass that grew over the ‘Long Man’ from that growing over the rest of Wind-door Hill.’

Jane Bellam’s survey (Bellam 1990) revealed disconcerting evidence that the concrete block outline does not even reliably mark the course of the earlier brick outlines. Both elbows are misplaced in relation to the yellow brick outline. The original crook of the right arm is still visible as a tight curve of three yellow bricks, a fragmentary surviving arc of the 1873–74 outline stranded 60 cm up the slope from the 1969 concrete outline. Something very similar can be seen in a comparable position on the left arm, where three yellow bricks sit 40 cm up the slope from the crook of the arm. Bellam plausibly proposes that the concrete blocks were laid within the brick outline, and the bricks removed afterwards; certainly that would have made the task easier, but it would also have made the Giant a little thinner.

EVIDENCE OF PRE-1874 DRAWINGS AND WRITINGS

The 1710 Rowley drawing (Fig. 1A) shows the legs straddling, emphatically turned outwards. The image as a whole is short and broad, the man plump and flat-footed, implying foreshortening; Rowley may have sketched the Giant from fairly close up, which would tend to flatten the feet even if they actually sloped diagonally downwards.

Burrell’s 1781 drawing (Fig. 1B) similarly shows a rather fat and flat-footed figure. In addition it shows the staves converted into a rake and scythe, and there has been much discussion about whether these features really existed. Other features of the drawing, such as shading and finely detailed facial features, cannot have been part of a hill figure and therefore must be projections of Burrell’s imagination; this casts doubt on the scythe and rake. The overall shape, symmetrical with feet turned outwards, is
nevertheless similar to that shown in the Rowley and Powell drawings.

The 1807 drawing made by the Revd David Powell (Fig. 2A) shows a symmetrical figure holding two vertical staves with nothing on their tips, a blank face and no clothing but a V-neck collar (Farrant 1995: SAS Library, Accession 9087). The drawing shows well-developed calf muscles, legs turned outwards, feet turned outwards and pointing slightly down the hill, the left more than the right and with its toe a little further down the slope. The general legs-apart and toes-pointing-outwards posture is similar to that shown in the earlier drawings by Rowley and Burrell. The irregularity in the shape of the head clearly shown by Rowley is also hinted at by Powell. The V on the chest is shown by both Powell and Burrell, and Powell has evidently not copied Burrell.

Powell’s account in the note accompanying the sketch is almost identical to Stebbing Shaw’s in The Topographer. This may be because Shaw was shown the figure by James Capper senior (who was vicar 1779–1802) and Powell was shown it by James Capper junior (vicar 1802–35). The Cappers may have given identical expositions, the son having learnt and passed on his father’s account. Other drawings show that Powell was a competent draughtsman, so the drawing probably represents with a fair degree of accuracy what he saw (Farrant 1995).

The 1850 engraving (Fig. 3) shows a scene with a gate and a hay wagon in the foreground (Cooper 1851). The Long Man is frustratingly small and sketchy in the background. The staves are complete, and so is the rest of the figure, though the feet are missing, showing that there was at least doubt about their position, which Cooper confirms in writing; ‘the lower parts are at all times extremely indistinct’. The left leg is bent slightly at the knee, showing that the leg is turned outwards; if that is correctly observed, the left foot must have turned out as well. The right leg has been drawn more or less straight. The western staff carries a short scythe blade or crook, but facing inwards, not outwards as in the Burrell drawing.

The head has some extra strokes of the pen added, suggesting locks of hair or a hat brim. Holden left these details out when he re-drew the image for his article and was picked up on it by a correspondent (Holden Papers, letter to J. Simpson dated 10 October 1979). Elsewhere in his notes, Holden comments that his own drawing was ‘not too good about the head. There could be a cap.’ But he also remarks that the local weather saying with its mention of a cap on the Long Man had led people to think that there must once have been one. The 1850 drawing does even so contain details that support both Burrell and Rowley in adding something in the way of headgear. As late as 1925 it was being claimed that a cap could still be made out; ‘from a distance he is seen to wear a cap’ (Goldring 1920, 25), though I believe that this too could be an inference from the weather lore.

Phené drew the Long Man in 1873 immediately before the bricking started, and the engraving published in The Graphic in February 1874 was made from his drawing (Figs 4 & 5A). The tops of the staves, above the fists, are missing, but otherwise the top half of the figure is much as it is now. The lower part of the figure peters out. The bottoms of the staves have gone, below the level of the knees, and so have the feet. The calf muscles have nevertheless been carefully drawn in and they show that the feet must have turned outwards, whether horizontally or diagonally. The drawing is careful, credible and consistent with the earlier representations of the figure; it also helps to explain the mistakes made in bricking the feet. De St Croix himself was reported as saying that The Graphic engraving ‘affords a very good view of the hill on which the figure is traced and gives a tolerably correct representation of the figure itself’ (Eastbourne Gazette, 18 February 1874).

Parish did his own ink drawing of the Long Man, unfortunately not from nature, which would have been more useful to us, but copied from the engraving in Cooper (1851); the composition is the same, with gate, wagon and clumps of trees in the foreground. Where Parish’s drawing differs is in the completion of the legs. Unfortunately, he has added heavy shading at the foot of the slope, which obscures the lower legs, but it is possible to make out feet pointing diagonally downwards; the Giant’s left foot is clearer than his right — a point that becomes significant when evaluating the photographic evidence. Parish, who lived at Selmeston and was interested enough in the Long Man to keep a scrapbook about him, would certainly have seen the turf figure, and known first-hand the position of the feet. One modern observer has claimed that the position of the left foot can still be seen, but this author has been unable to detect any surface trace of it.
The engraving entitled ‘Giant as seen in 1850’ included in de St Croix’s 1875 paper is identical to the one in Cooper, except for the face (Fig. 6). The eyes are made to turn to the east, and a line curves down the western side of the face as if it wears a hood; the effect is to hint at a three-quarter view, with the head turned slightly to look to the east. The drawing in The Graphic also has the head in the three-quarter position, turned slightly towards the east. I doubt whether this artistic twist of the head was part of the hill figure image; it is more likely to be a touch of artistic licence on the part of the 1874 engraver preparing the 1850 plate, or perhaps even accidental damage. Perhaps Phené or The Graphic’s engraver saw the 1874 version of the 1850 drawing and copied it into The Graphic illustration.

The two later Plenderleath drawings add little to what we already know (Plenderleath 1892, 39). The first, without feet, shows the Long Man as he may have looked just before the bricking (Fig. 5B), but the image looks as if it was carefully copied from The Graphic drawing (Fig. 5A). The second drawing by Plenderleath is similar to the first but with eastward-pointing feet and full-length staves added. Plenderleath adapted his first drawing to accommodate the completed staves and the incorrectly restored feet, though not the upper parts of the staves; the resulting image does not look very much like the Long Man of the post-bricking period — and in any case we have photographs of that. The Plenderleath drawings take us no closer to the image as it may have looked before the bricking.

**Measurement**

De St Croix gives the distance between the staves as 119 ft (36.27 m), but they are now 117 ft (35.66 m) apart at the top and 114 ft (34.75 m) apart at the bottom (Petrie 1926). Rowley’s drawing suggests that he thought the distance was 200 ft (60.97 m), which is obviously an error in estimation. Burrell (British Library Add. MS. 5697, f.342v.) says the figure was 80 ft (24.38 m) high, clearly a slip for 80 yards (73.14 m), which is an accurate figure, as we shall see. Perhaps de St Croix made a mistake. But the original lines were broader than the 15-centimetre bricks or 22-centimetre concrete blocks; Jane Bellam implies that the staves were shallow ditches of the order of 60 cm wide before the bricking (Bellam 1990). If the pre-1873 outlines were 60 cm wide, the ‘119 ft’ may represent an accurate overall measurement of the distance from the outer edge of one staff to the outer edge of the other.

The bricks and blocks, in other words, represent an unintentional narrowing and refining of the image, an alteration which will have had a profound effect on people’s perception of the Long Man over the last century and a quarter. The author’s survey of the Cerne Giant indicated that in the past the Dorset figure had outlines up to a metre wide in places, and probably varying round the figure, as compared with the uniform 38 cm adhered to by the present Warden, who thinks of it as ‘15 inches’ (Castleden 1995; 1996a). Widening the Long Man’s outlines to 30 or 60 cm would make the image bolder, stronger and more conspicuous as a landscape feature.

**EVIDENCE OF THE 1874 LAVIS PHOTOGRAPHS**

When the bricking was finished in the spring of 1874,
the Eastbourne photographic firm of G. and R. Lavis took photographs of the new monument. The *Eastbourne Gazette* announced that a set of three views of the figure was available. Prints of two of these were still in the possession of F. W. de St Croix in the 1970s and seen by Holden. One was hazy and showed little detail; Holden had no hesitation in preferring the other, which he used in his 1971 paper (Holden 1971, pl. 2). Holden saw on it ‘faint markings in the turf [that] can be interpreted as an alternative outline of the Long Man’s left leg’, but admitted to diffidence; they may have been ‘rabbit runs or the traces of footpaths formed by the workmen who laid the bricks’ (Holden 1971, 49). Holden’s reluctance to accept ‘the somewhat doubtful evidence of the photograph’ is odd, in that he goes on to say that he accepts that the restoration of the left leg was mistaken, and that the left foot should point either west or north-west. This is exactly what the photograph shows.

The photograph was taken from some distance away, under conditions that favoured the revelation of a shallow trench; the long shadows of the horses below and to the west of the figure show that it was taken on a sunny spring afternoon with a clear, slanting light brushing the turf. Although the outline shows up well on the photograph, the depressions were so slight that they could easily have been missed by men walking about on the figure.

Cooper noted in 1851, as Horsfield had in 1835, ‘The outline is so slightly indented in the turf that to a close inspection it is imperceptible; but when viewed from a distance with a strong side-light, i.e., either in the morning or evening, it may be plainly seen.’ Even so, it is surprising that de St Croix, who not only saw but possessed a copy of the photograph that shows the results of his labours so well, either did not notice the correct outline of the left leg or, if he did, chose not to rectify the mistake. It is even more surprising that, when the opportunity arose on the occasion of the re-bricking in 1891–92, the mistake was still not put right.

It might be possible to extract more information from the photograph, but the whereabouts of the original Lavis negatives, if they still exist, are not known. When Holden used the Lavis photograph in 1971, he borrowed a print from the de St Croix family and had it re-photographed. There was a loss of clarity when this re-print was processed for publication in the journal. The original negative plate of the re-print is stored at Edward Reeves’ shop, where Holden left it 30 years ago. At my request, Reeves made a high-contrast enlargement of the central area containing the figure (Fig. 7).

The alternative position for the left foot and the entire left leg show up well on the new print. The inner edge of the left leg is a straight dark line passing diagonally down from the fork of the legs towards the articulation at the heel; it is significantly more splayed than the restored leg. The outer edge of the left leg also shows as a dark line, slightly less clear, and this time markedly sinuous; the intention was to indicate a bulging thigh muscle, which parted company from the modern brick outline as high as the hip, a narrowing at the knee, and a slight indication of a calf muscle tapering gracefully off into the foot. The foot appears long and tapered, continuing the diagonal thrust of the leg, exactly as Bunston described. Viewed as a whole, the ‘shadow’ outline forms a consistent and coherent alternative leg, the earlier leg that was entirely overlooked during the 1873–74 restoration. The shadow outline disappeared relatively rapidly; it is,
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for instance, not detectable on the 1918 air photograph (SAS Working Papers, Misc. 1/24) and cannot be seen today.

There is in the Holden print a very slight indication of an earlier position for the lower right leg too, in a straight line that continues diagonally down the slope from the line of the inside edge of the right thigh. It would seem quite natural for the straightness of the original inner edge of the left leg to be reflected in a straight inner edge for the right leg. Below the right toe there are some diagonal lines, which may perhaps be vestiges of an earlier position of the right foot.

Below the line of the left arm a groove closely follows the line of blocks exactly parallel to it. Given Bellam’s idea of the blocks being set within the brick outline, this may well be the course of the 1874/1892 brick outline.

In the Revd W. D. Parish’s 1873–74 Wilmington scrapbook is a sepia print of the Lavis photograph of the Long Man, this time a contemporary print from the original Lavis negative (Farrant 1993, 137, n.12 noted the existence of the print). Richard Philcox re-photographed the picture for me. In spite of extensive damage and the generally poor quality of the original, the central area was still intact, so this was enlarged. Richard Philcox’s print (Fig. 8) shows the earlier position of the left foot and leg, though less clearly than in the Holden copy. It nevertheless shows what appears to be an earlier position of the fork of the legs and the inner edge of the right thigh, features that are not visible on first inspection in the Holden copy. It appears from the Philcox print that the fork was about a metre higher up the hill and to the right (east) of its present position; this was previously unsuspected.

The line marking the inner edge of the right thigh is a straight line parallel to and to the east of the 1969 bricked line. The line marking the inner edge of the lower right leg has a distinct curve indicating the calf muscle, confirming that the right leg was in a different position.

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Fig. 8. The Lavis photograph, from the print in the Parish scrapbook (central area re-photographed and enlarged by Richard Philcox).

Fig. 9. A: Results of the resistivity survey across the top of the head and staves. Black = high resistivity, hatched = low resistivity. B: Interpretation. a = right (east) stave (1969 blocks). b = head (1969 blocks). c = head (1969 blocks). d = previous upward extension of east stave. e = hat, helmet or former position of head. f = previous upward extension of west stave. g = scythe, crook or flail. The solid black lines are the present bricked outline. The faint diagonal striping is produced by terracettes.
leg, and therefore the right foot, must have turned outwards. Because a more easterly position for the inner edge of the right leg is indicated, it would seem essential that there was a more easterly position for the outer edge, and this is just detectable on the resistivity survey as a line 0.5–1 m in front of the right shin (Figs 10 & 11).

The Philcox photograph shows what may be an earlier position of the right foot. Its toe was below the sole of the present foot, and may have reached the same contour as the toe of the original left foot. Re-examination of the Holden print reveals a very faint tapering right foot similar to the left. The overall inference is that both feet pointed diagonally down the slope before 1873.

GEOPHYSICAL EVIDENCE

THE 1969 RESISTIVITY SURVEY

Burrell commented in 1781 that the outline became more visible in summer. This suggests that the shallow outline marked the course of a trench, either containing soil retaining more moisture than the surrounding hillside and therefore showing up darker, or containing chalk rubble from early attempts to repair the figure and retaining less moisture and showing up paler. Either way, geophysical survey might be expected to yield further information.

A resistivity survey was undertaken in July 1969, by Ken Gravett. The Gravett survey covered a small area, the technique was in its infancy and there was no satisfactory way of displaying the results. The plan in Holden’s paper shows a scatter of crosses marking anisotropic anomalies; no pattern is really visible (see Holden 1971, fig. 3). The results were disappointingly inconclusive.

THE 1996–97 RESISTIVITY SURVEYS

A new campaign of resistivity surveys, taking a higher density of readings over a larger area, and processing them by means of computer techniques not available in the 1960s, nevertheless seemed likely to reveal the location of filled-in trenches. I designed and built a resistivity meter with a 25-centimetre probe setting to ensure that maximal detail would be picked up, and tried it out in a pilot study on the Cerne Giant (Castleden 1993; 1995; 1996a,b). The Cerne resistivity surveys proved successful in revealing lost features and I returned to the Long Man with the intention of using the mini-meter there. In practice, the survey area was so large (5300 sq. m in total) that I gratefully accepted Andrew Woodcock’s offer of the use of his Geoscan Meter to cover most of the survey area, using my own meter only for re-runs of small areas to extract more detail; these were then ‘sewn’ into the Geoscan data sets.

a) Area across head and staves

Resistivity readings were taken every 0.5 m over an area 50 m across and 10 m high, taking in the tops of the staves and the crown of the head, and plotted twice over, using Geoplot and Surfer software. The Gravett data were also re-processed so that results could be compared. Both 1996–97 and 1969 data showed that the staves were once slightly taller. Figure 9 summarizes the results of both surveys.

The hillside is striped by terracettes, some exaggerated by livestock. They showed up in the results as parallel lines of lows (the moister, soil-covered paths) and highs (the drier, rubbly outer edges of the terracettes).

The line of the left (west) stave is a clear thin line of low resistivity, suggesting a narrow soil-filled trench beneath the concrete blocks. This narrow line of lows passes down the slope within a broader but well-developed zone of high resistivity, suggesting a zone of disturbed ground 2 m wide, stonier than the rest of the survey area. This zone has an axis that is skewed about 4° from the line of the bricked stave; since it crosses the terracettes and contours at right angles, it may represent a trail of downwashed chalk rubble eroded or weathered from further up the hillside. The east stave does not show up on the resistivity readings at all, although an extension above its top shows as a line of lows about 3 m long. This suggests that the east stave was 3 m taller in the past. The absence of a patch of high resistivity associated with the east stave suggests that the highs associated with the west stave were indeed produced by downwash from some source upslope. There is a small but noticeable ‘spearhead’ of highs capping the east stave’s extension, consistent with rubbly upcast from a trench.

A diagonal line of high resistivity leads down to the west from the top of the west stave. Within it is a faint, narrow line of lows, implying a trenched outline of the same type as the stave. This coincides with the line of anisotropic anomalies in Gravett’s 1969 survey, which shows that it is an enduring soil feature. It also matches well the blade of the haymaker’s scythe shown on the Burrell drawing.
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Fig. 10. A: Results of the resistivity survey across the feet. Black = high resistivity, hatched = low resistivity.
B: Interpretation.

(Fig. 1B). The shape could as easily be interpreted as a shepherd’s crook or a flail, but whether it really represents part of the hill figure drawing or is a natural feature is impossible to tell without some further evidence.

About 2.5 m above the head there is a thin halo of high resistivity. Its form may suggest a round helmet or the crown of a rustic wide-awake hat or an earlier position of the Long Man’s head. The lows above the head form three 4-metre plumes or antlers springing from the top and sides of the crown, but it must be emphasized that these indications are very indistinct and are likely to be no more than random variations in soil texture. The western one and the lateral branches of the central one are in fact created by terracettes. I do not believe that the plumes were ever part of the hill figure design.

b) The hips and upper legs
The whole of the lower half of the Giant, an area

30 m wide and 40 m high, was surveyed in a similar way. The survey rectangle extended almost to the staves, so that any features that may have been previously overlooked within the frame of the staves would not be missed.

The terracettes crossing the image as lines of lows make the faint and ambiguous resistivity variations behind them difficult to decipher. The modern outline of the Long Man’s legs shows up as lines of lows with occasional highs. There are only the faintest indications of even the present body outline from the waist down to the knees, and no suggestion of an alternative position from the present one. An outstanding feature of the survey of the centre of the figure is the uniformity of the resistivity readings; most lie within a narrow range with a small number of peaks only, and the peaks can easily be explained in terms of chalk blocks in the soil or possibly brick fragments from the dismantled 1873–74 and 1891–92 figures. There is no sign in the middle of the figure of any additional features, no sign of any changes. There are no indications of a phallus or lines suggesting a belt, kilt, tunic, or any other form of clothing.

c) The lower legs and feet
The readings from the area adjacent to the modern feet contain wider variations. This suggests that the soil has been disturbed there and is consistent with the feet having been changed, perhaps more than
once, making the resulting shapes difficult to read (Fig. 10). The area indicated by the Lavis photograph as the pre-1873 location of the left foot shows as an indistinct area of lows, indicating a foot roughly 3 m wide and 6–8 m long. It is not possible to extract the shape of the foot from the resistivity readings on their own; nevertheless, when they are compared with the foot outline on the Lavis photograph it is possible to see that the indistinct patch of lows does coincide with it. The diagonal form of the foot is visible. The original foot was well clear of the present foot and entirely separate from it, with the toes of the two left feet pointing in opposite directions about 11 m apart — a large error by any standards.

There are indistinct lines of lows crossing the present right foot diagonally, and extending 3 to 4 m further down the slope, indicating the pre-1873 location of the Giant's right foot. It points diagonally downwards and to the east, which would make it approximately symmetrical with the left foot on the Lavis photograph (Fig. 11). The original right foot — if that is what we are seeing — appears to have been tapering, triangular in form and roughly 6 m long by 2 to 3 m wide, comparable with the original left foot. It must be emphasized that the resistivity indications for both left and right feet are very slight.

CONCLUSION — AN EVEN LONGER MAN

In the 1970s, Eric Holden replied to a correspondent, 'The [concrete block] outline is not necessarily correct, but is the Revd de St Croix's interpretation. We shall never know, I fear, what the correct outline was' (Holden Papers, letter to J. Glover dated 4 August 1973). I hope that this paper, written 30 years on, will generate a spirit of greater optimism that the shape and location of the hill figure prior to 1873 may be recoverable, and that some parts of the ancient image have in fact already been recovered, some by Holden himself.

Two and a half metres above the Long Man's head a faint indication in the geophysical survey suggests the curving crown of a hat or helmet. There are alternative explanations for the arc, which may be a former position of the head itself. Although it is tempting to blame the creep of the bricked outline down the slope for this, it is unlikely that the brick or block outlines have moved that far since 1874; the slight buckling of the 1969 outline suggests a movement of only a few centimetres in the last 30 years. Another possibility is that at some time the head was drawn larger than it now is. The line of low resistivity readings which rises 4 m from the top of the head, then divides to make a short eastern branch and a longer western stalk, may represent the remains of an antlered or plumbed head-dress, or it may be a natural soil feature — far more likely the latter. There are traces of similar plumes, also 4 m long, sprouting from the temples. The question of a hat or some other form of head-dress for the Long Man has not been resolved by the resistivity surveys.

Thin lines of low resistivity readings rising above the top of each stave suggest that both staves were once 3 m taller. There is no trace of the labara that would support a Roman origin for the figure. Neither stave was topped by a rake. The well-marked diagonal line 9 m long passing down to the west from the top of the left (west) stave may at some earlier stage have been part of the figure; it could be the feature seen by Burrell and represented by him as a scythe blade. The same feature could equally be interpreted as a shepherd's crook or a flail; whichever of these interpretations is favoured, the extra feature is consistent with an agricultural image.

The resistivity survey shows that the centre of the figure has not changed apart from the narrowing of the outlines to the width of the bricks or blocks. There are no indications of earlier or alternative positions for the waist and hips. There is no sign that the figure has moved down the slope. There is no sign of a phallus or other additional anatomical detail. There are no lines suggesting a belt or other items of clothing. There are no resistivity anomalies in the large empty spaces between the hips and the staves to suggest that anything else was ever marked on the hillside.

At the bottom of the figure the resistivity survey data show more variations, implying disturbance and perhaps significant changes there. The pattern of lows below the present right (east) foot conveys a slight suggestion of an earlier position for the right foot, pointing diagonally down the slope and reaching 2 to 3 m further down the slope. The pattern of lows to the west of the present left (west) foot suggests a long tapering foot 6 or 8 m long and 3 m wide, and reaching perhaps 1 metre further down the slope than the original left foot. The figure was therefore probably more nearly symmetrical than it is today — and 2 or 3 m taller. The resistivity survey data are consistent with what the Lavis photograph tells us about the left foot, but add no
SHAPE-SHIFTING

detail or sharpness of definition.

The lower figure as a whole is not clearly defined by the resistivity readings of the 1996–97 survey, and from this point of view the survey results are disappointing. Nevertheless, by putting the resistivity readings together with the evidence of both available prints of the Lavis photograph, it is possible to reconstruct the outlines of both feet immediately prior to 1873 with some confidence, establishing that before the bricking the Long Man was more nearly symmetrical than it is today. The combined evidence of the resistivity survey and the Lavis photograph shows that the legs were more splayed than they are today, with the feet pointing diagonally down the slope, continuing the diagonal thrust of the legs, as Bunston described in 1912. This significantly alters the overall effect of the image, as the provisional reconstruction shows (Fig. 12); the Giant becomes more energetic, less Earth-bound, jumping up or springing out of the hill, or walking down the hill to meet us. Incorporating the inner edge of the right leg taken from the Parish copy of the Lavis photograph and moving the outer edge of that leg half a metre eastwards in accordance with the geophysical evidence makes the right leg approximately as thick as the left. When these small changes are added something interesting happens to the image. The Giant’s hips swing slightly to the right so that he appears to carry his weight on his right leg, and this is hinted at in both the Powell and Cooper drawings.

If the curved feature 2.5 m above the head marks the earlier position of the top of the head and the earlier positions of the two feet are taken into account as well, then we are seeing under the turf an image that is taller than the present outline by 5.5 m. Instead of measuring 70 m (229 ft 9 in.) tall, the Long Man becomes 75.5 m (248 ft) tall. If we set the uncertainty of the earlier position for the top of the head to one side and add only the extended feet, we arrive at an original pre-bricking height of 73 m (239 ft 6 in.) — a significantly longer Long Man than we see on the hillside today, longer by ten feet, and almost exactly the ‘80 yards’ or ‘240 feet’ given by Royer in 1787 and Horsfield in 1835.

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Author: Rodney Castleden, 15 Knepp Close, Bevendean, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 4LD.
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