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East Sussex
County Council

Feature Identification Charts
a toolkit for wooded landscapes

Historic Environment Awareness Project - led by East Sussex County Council and involving West Sussex County Council and Kent County Council, as part of the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme.

WEALD FOREST RIDGE Landscape Partnership

heritage lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED

ENGLISH HERITAGE

west sussex county council

Kent County Council

HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wooded landscapes - Feature identification

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

In this Toolkit, the archaeological features you may find are divided up into 8 different sections. The sections are based on what the features look like. The sections are:

- **Levelled areas**
- **Single bank**
- **Multiple banks**
- **Mounds – circular**
- **Mounds – not circular**
- **Hollows – circular**
- **Hollows – not circular**
- **Watercourses, ditches & drains**

When you find a feature, look at its shape and form to decide which section it fits into. If you are doing a Survey and using the Feature Recording Forms, the sections are listed on these (also listed are 'Disturbed ground' and 'Other' for those features which don't fit it into any section).

Each section has a flowchart. Follow the flowchart down the page until you come to a possible identification. If you can't identify the feature using one section, try another. Some features may fit into more than one section. And remember, you will not be able to identify everything you discover! The underlined features are shown as they may have looked when in use.

At the end of the Toolkit is a section showing Significant Trees, to enable you to identify these.

If you would like help to identify features, contact the South East Woodland Archaeology Forum on -

http://www.sewaf.org.uk

WHICH FEATURES ARE IMPORTANT?

It is important to record all archaeological features - this will give you a more complete story of how the landscape was used in the past. It will also help you to work out the relative age of features to each other.

YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY MANY FEATURES!

Interpretation will always be open to discussion. Remember that a feature may have had more than one use; for example, the ditch alongside a woodbank may have been used as a trackway and become wide and hollowed out by feet and hooves over time.

Always walk around any feature you find, to see its full shape and extent. Obviously this isn't possible with banks that disappear into the distance, or enormous holes and mounds.

Boundaries & tracks

Many boundaries, such as woodbanks, may be marked on maps, even though they're no longer in use. Tracks may also be marked. Some of these features might be very old, some more recent. Although many are already accurately plotted, you should still fill in a recording form to record the shape and condition of these features if they appear to have historic origins.

Changing landscapes

The shape and size of banks and ditches depended on what they bounded. Those around fields differed from those around woods or parkland. However, the field may now be tree-covered and the wood may have been cut down, so the land use is now very different. Some banks and ditches were adapted for new uses. Remember how the landscape may have changed when you find these features.

Significant trees

These should be recorded wherever they are found. This is most often on banks or next to tracks.
A significant tree is one that has been managed or is very old.

WHAT WE HAVE LEFT OUT:

Quarries

Can be any shape or size. They haven't been included within the charts for this reason, but they should be recorded. There may be spoilheaps nearby. The hole may now be filled with water and look like a pond.

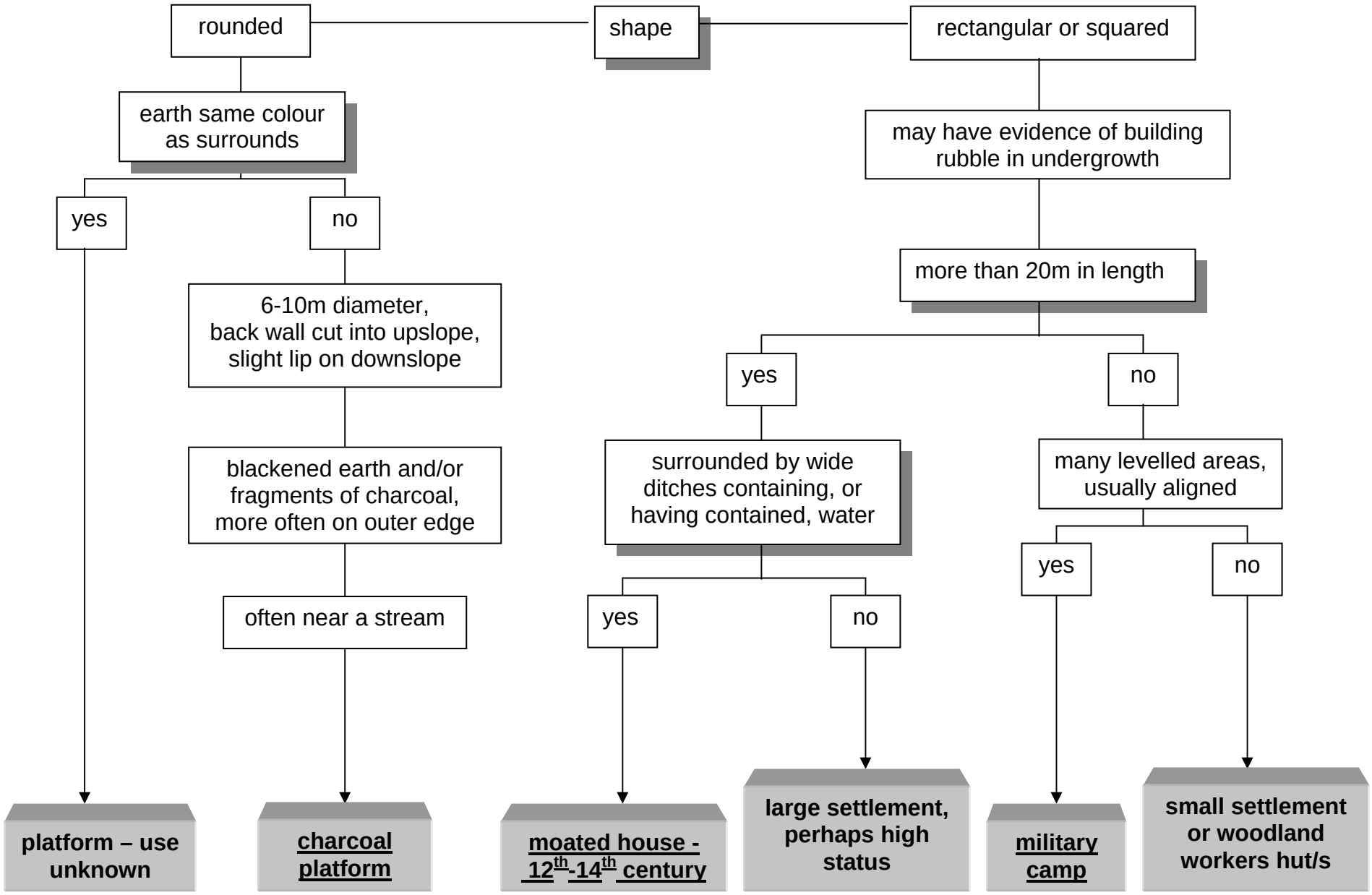
Military features

Come in many shapes and sizes and it isn't possible to include them all. If you cannot identify an unusual feature it may have military origins.

Tree throws

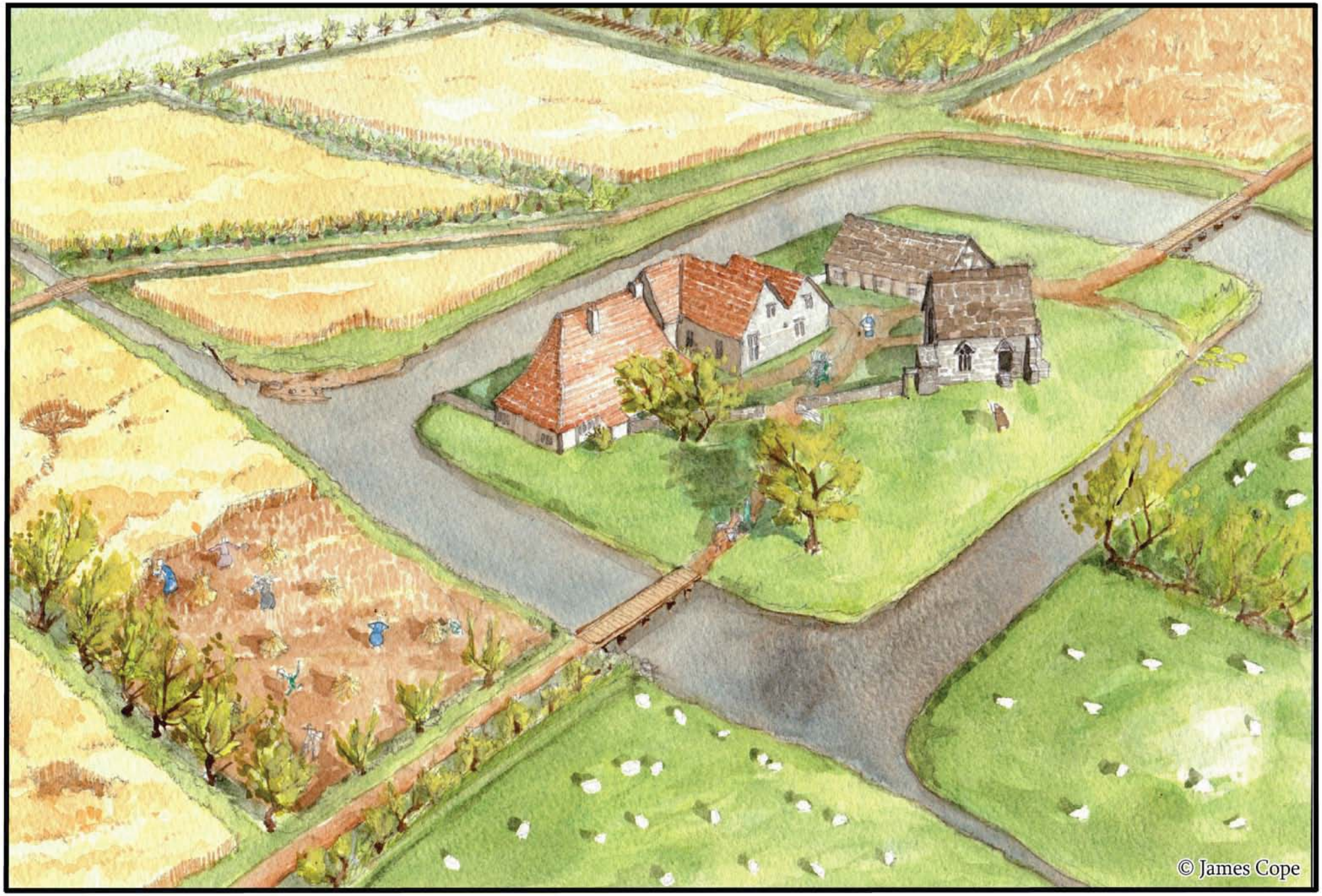
Are the circular hollows left when large trees fall. A lot of damage was done to woodland trees in the 1987 and 1991 storms and tree throws may be visible, many with the remains of the trunk. They don't need to be recorded unless you think that the tree was very old and therefore significant.

LEVELLED AREAS



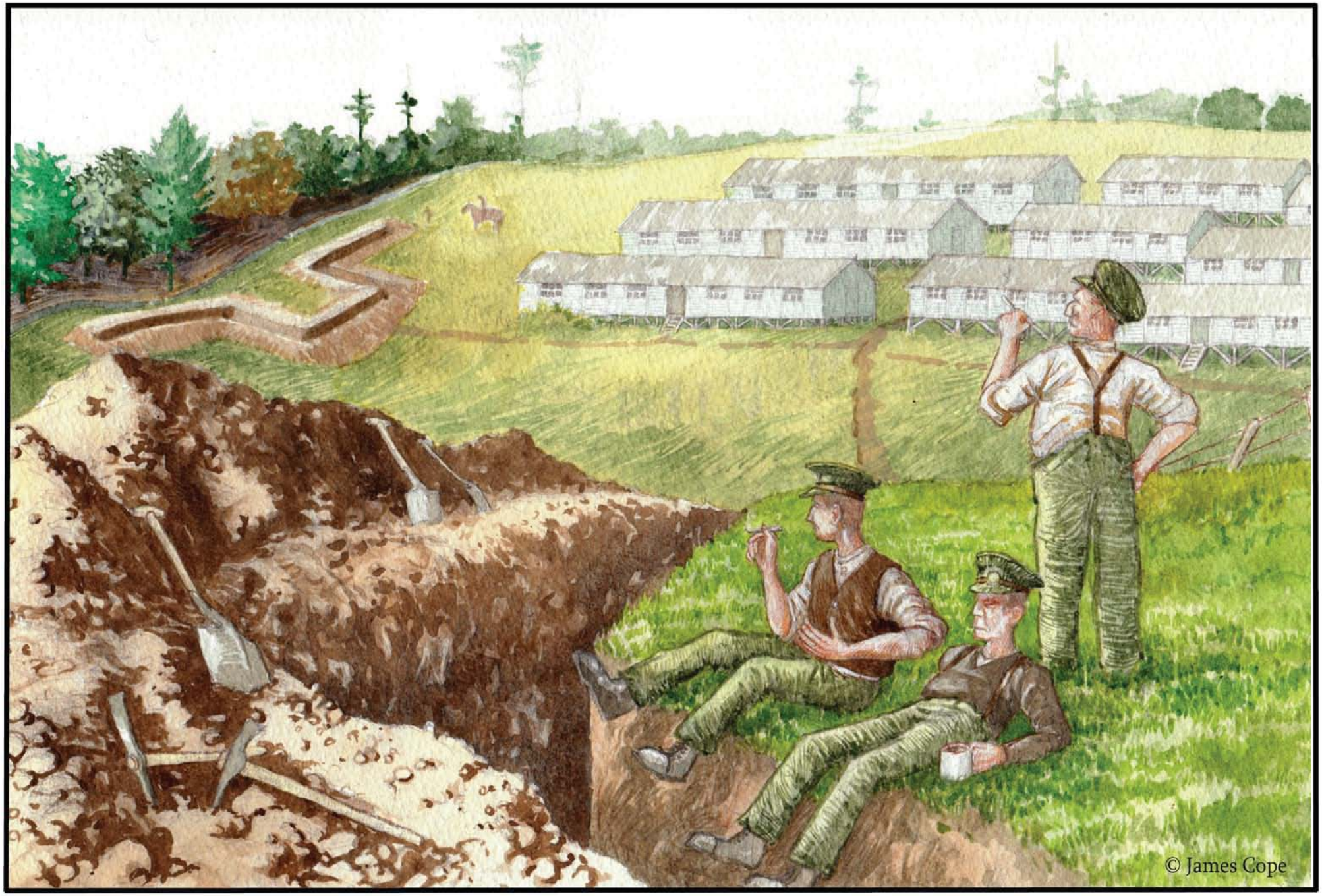
LEVELLED AREAS

Charcoal platforms were rounded level areas made for a ‘clamp’ to be built, often near a stream



LEVELLED AREAS, and DITCHES

Manor houses with a surrounding moat were built in the medieval period

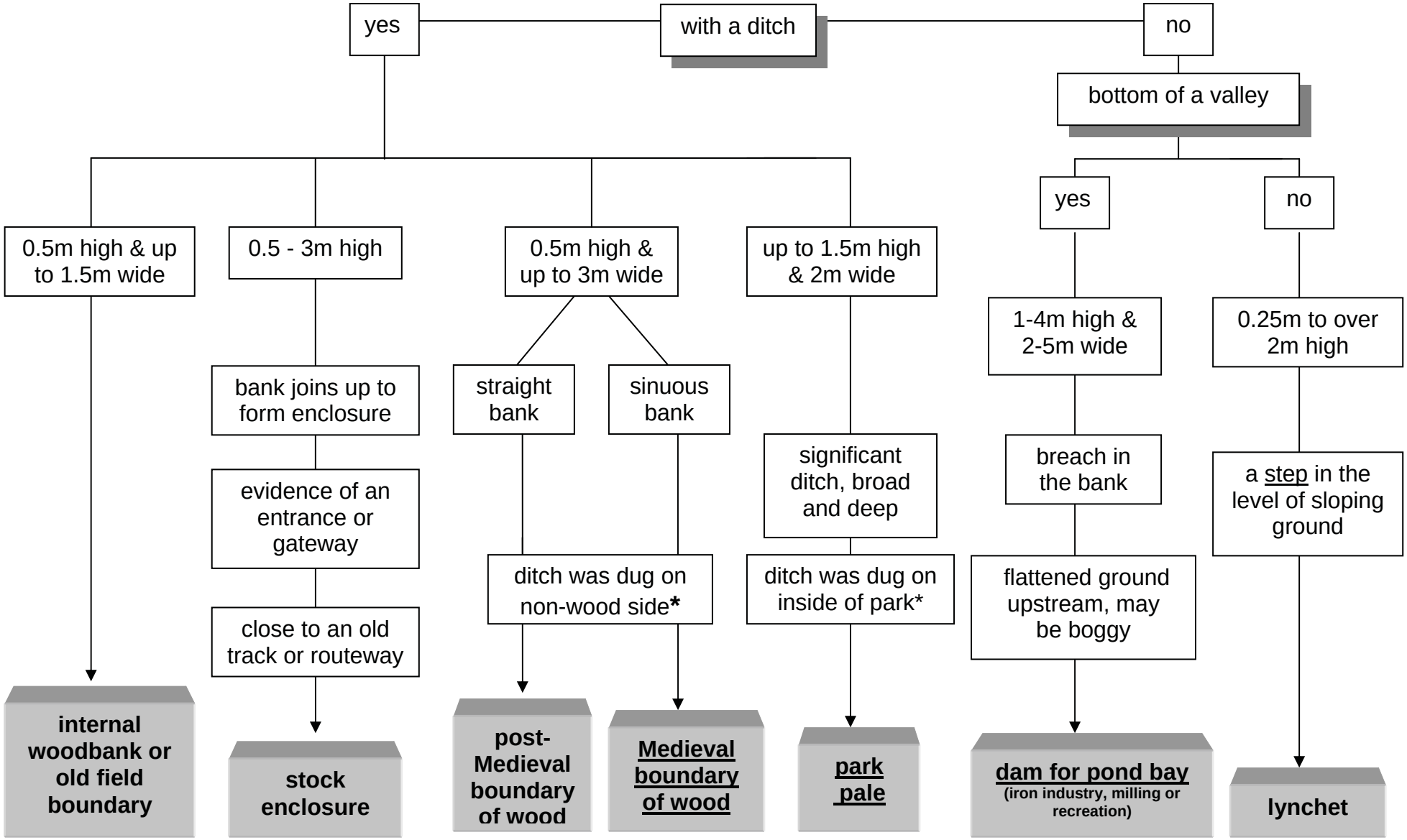


LEVELLED AREAS, and HOLLOWS - not circular

Military camps, often of WWI but also of WWII and the earlier Napoleonic era, often had associated trenches

SINGLE BANK

SIGNIFICANT TREES (see flowchart) ARE OFTEN FOUND ON BANKS. NOTE THEM WITHIN THE DESCRIPTION BOX ON THE FEATURE RECORD FORM.



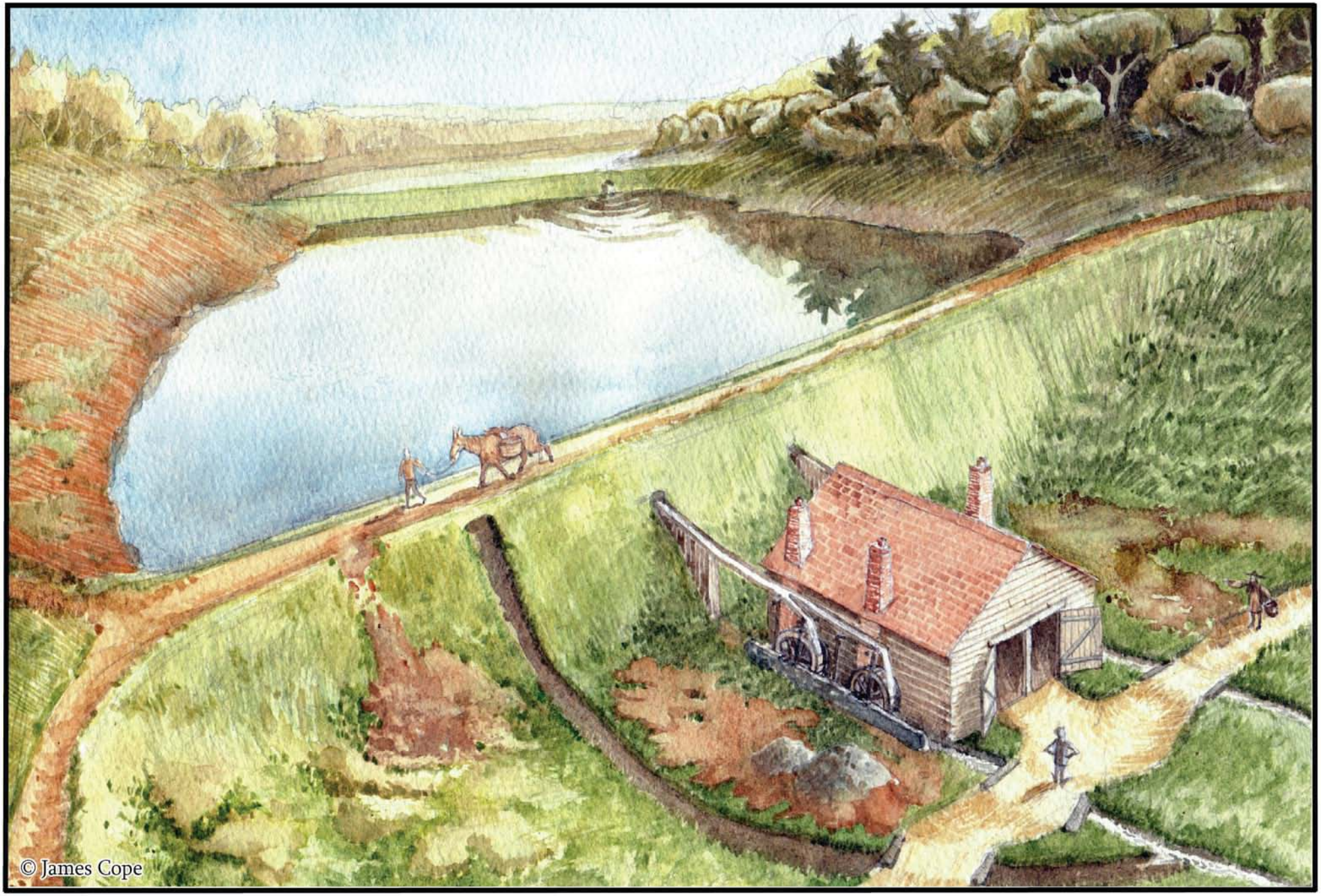
* Woodland may have grown up on the other side of the bank too, or have been felled on the original side. Be aware that the wood may have disappeared or changed sides!

SINGLE BANK

A woodbank enclosed valuable areas of woodland

SINGLE BANK

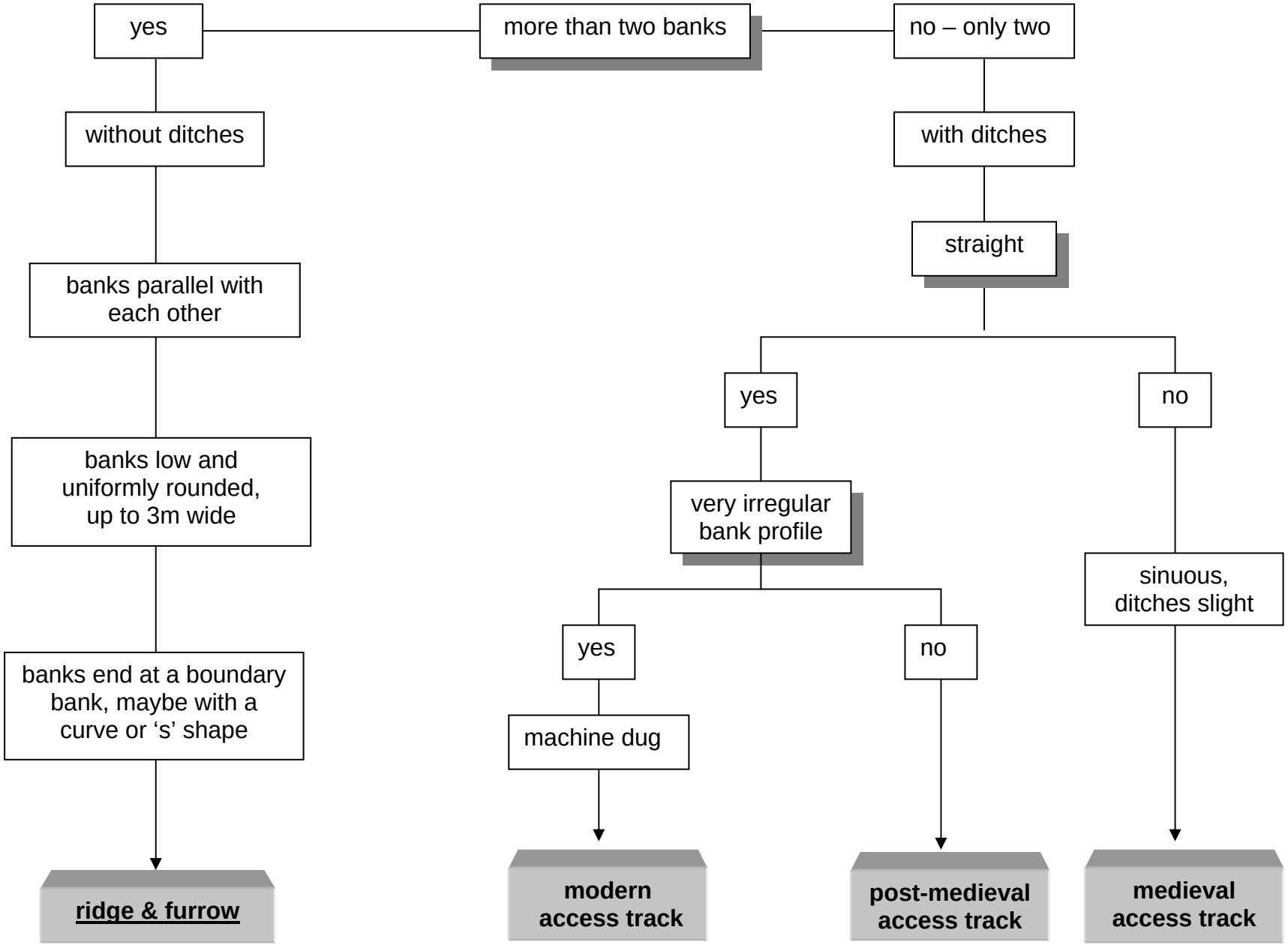
Park pales had a high bank with a deep ditch on the inside of the Park, to stop deer escaping

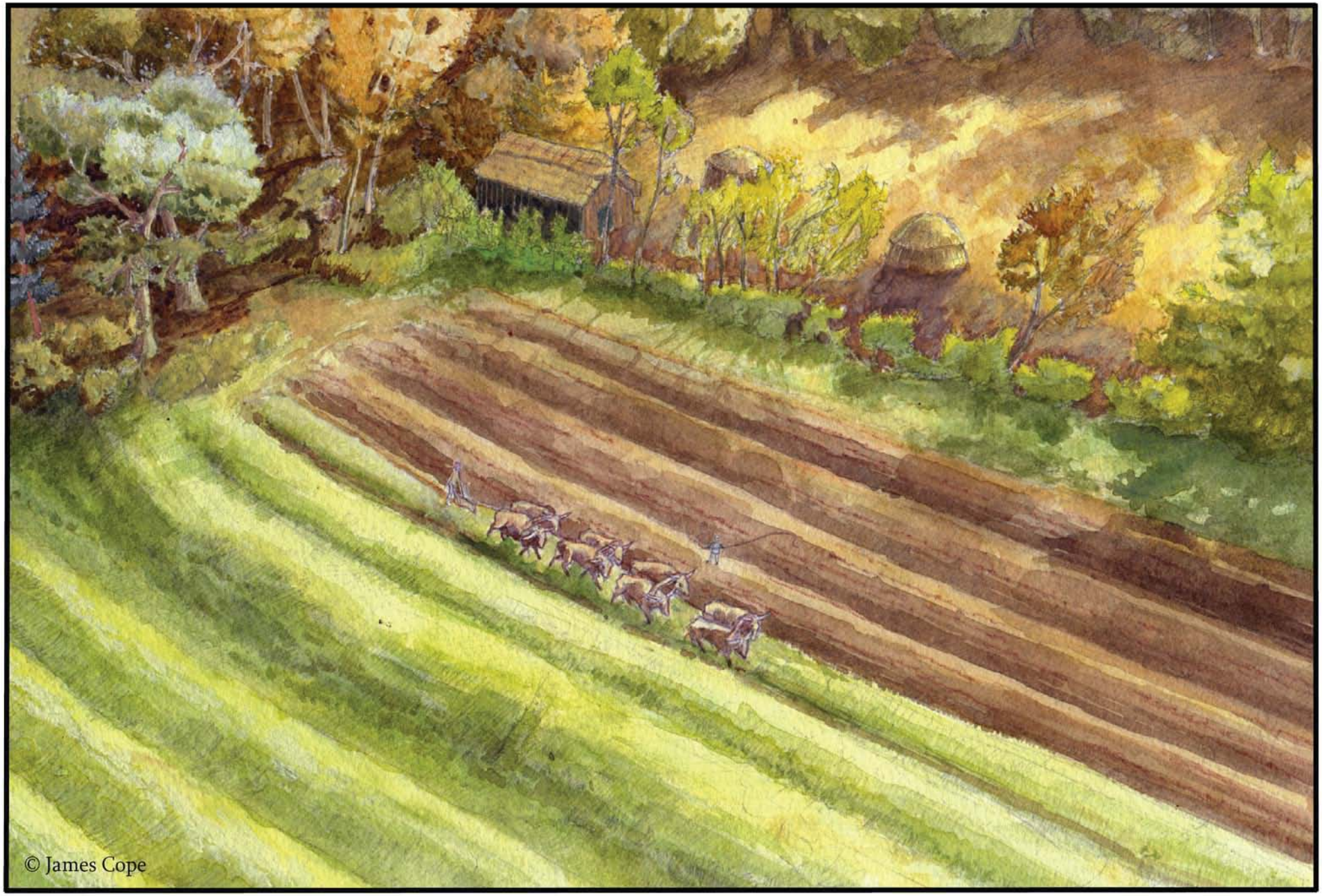


SINGLE BANK

Pond bays were large dams creating a water supply to power mills, furnaces and forges

MULTIPLE BANKS

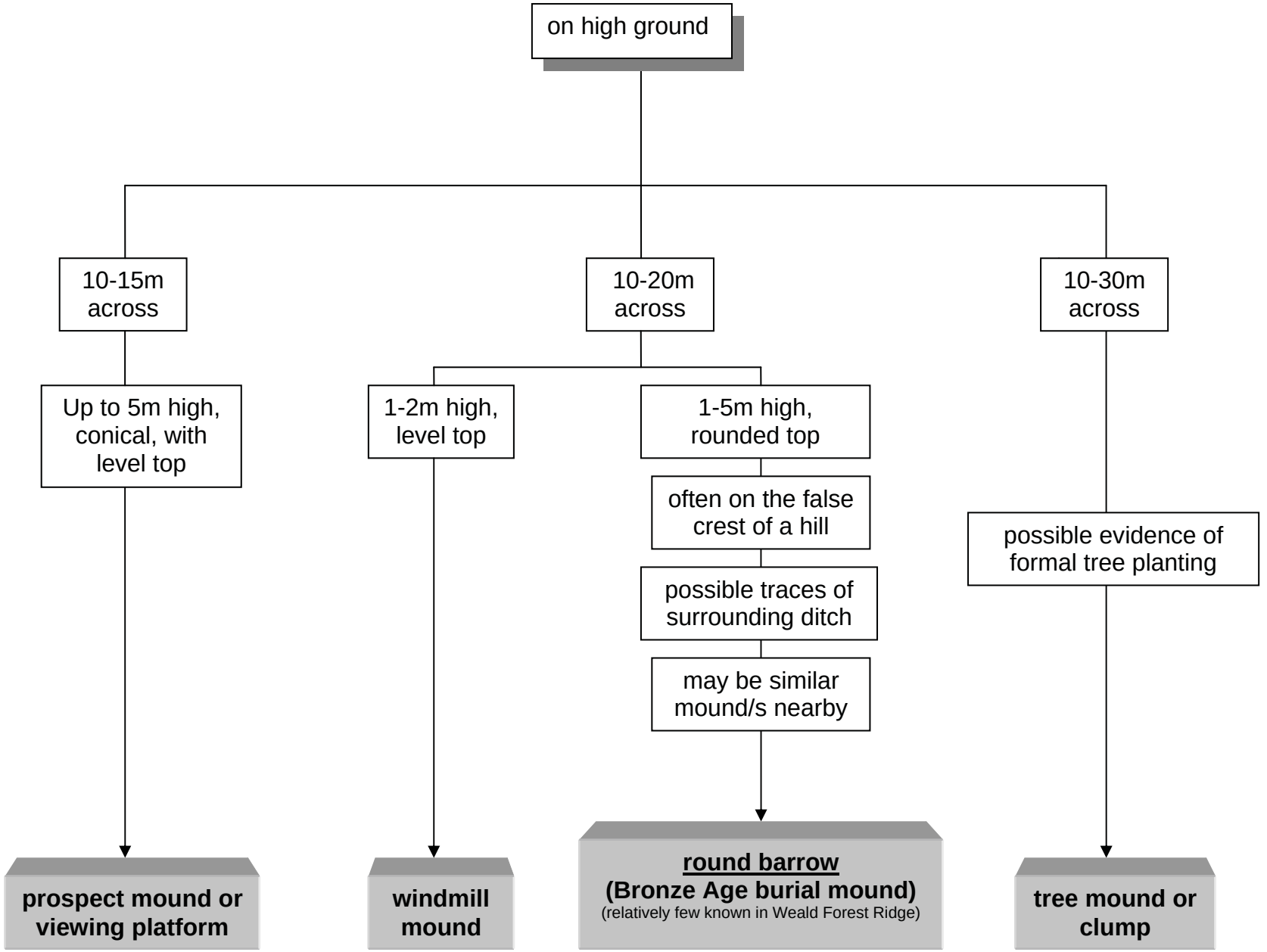




MULTIPLE BANKS

Ridge & furrow was created by the plough turning soil to one side, making mounds

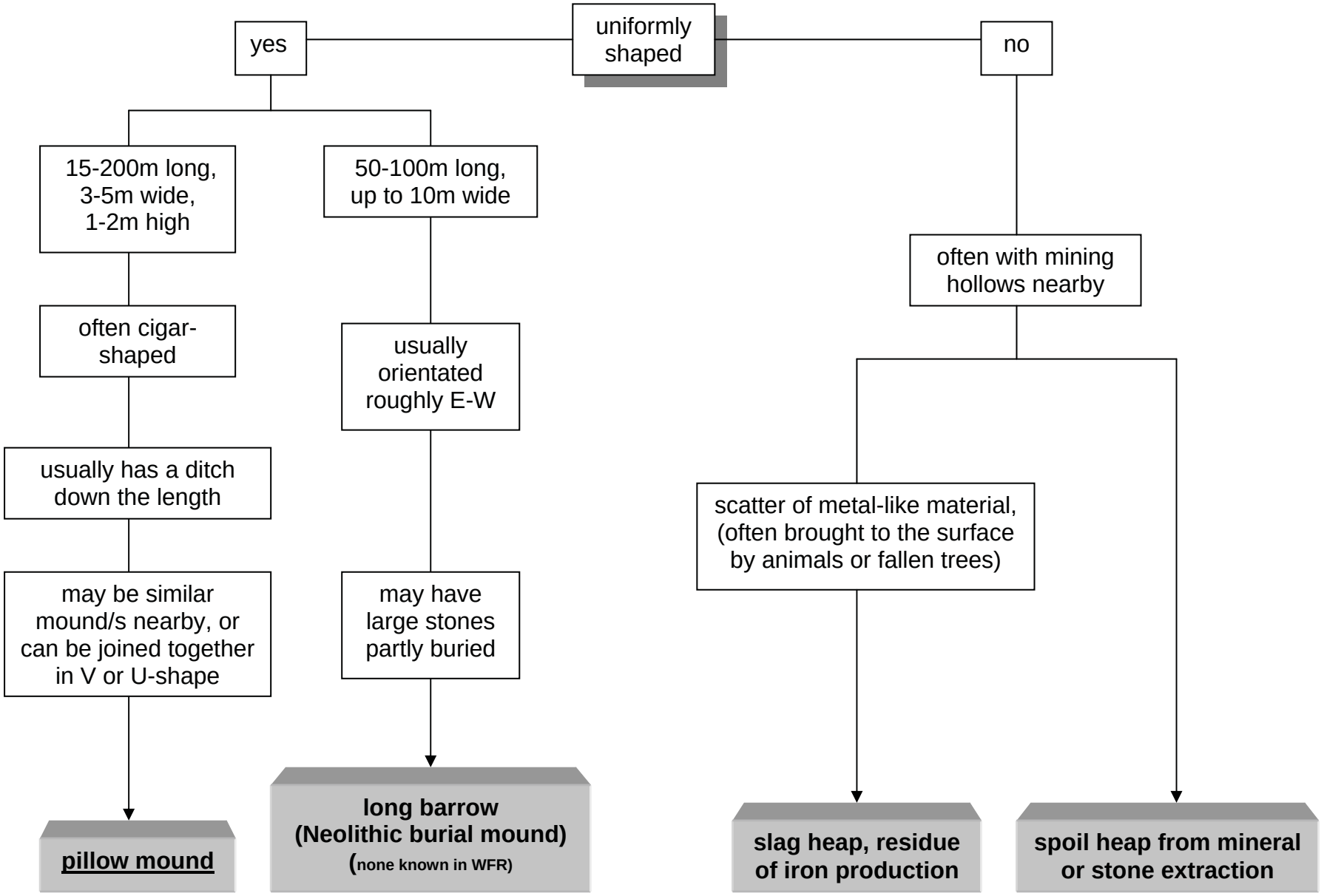
MOUNDS – circular



MOUNDS - circular

Round barrows were built in the Bronze Age and often contained burials

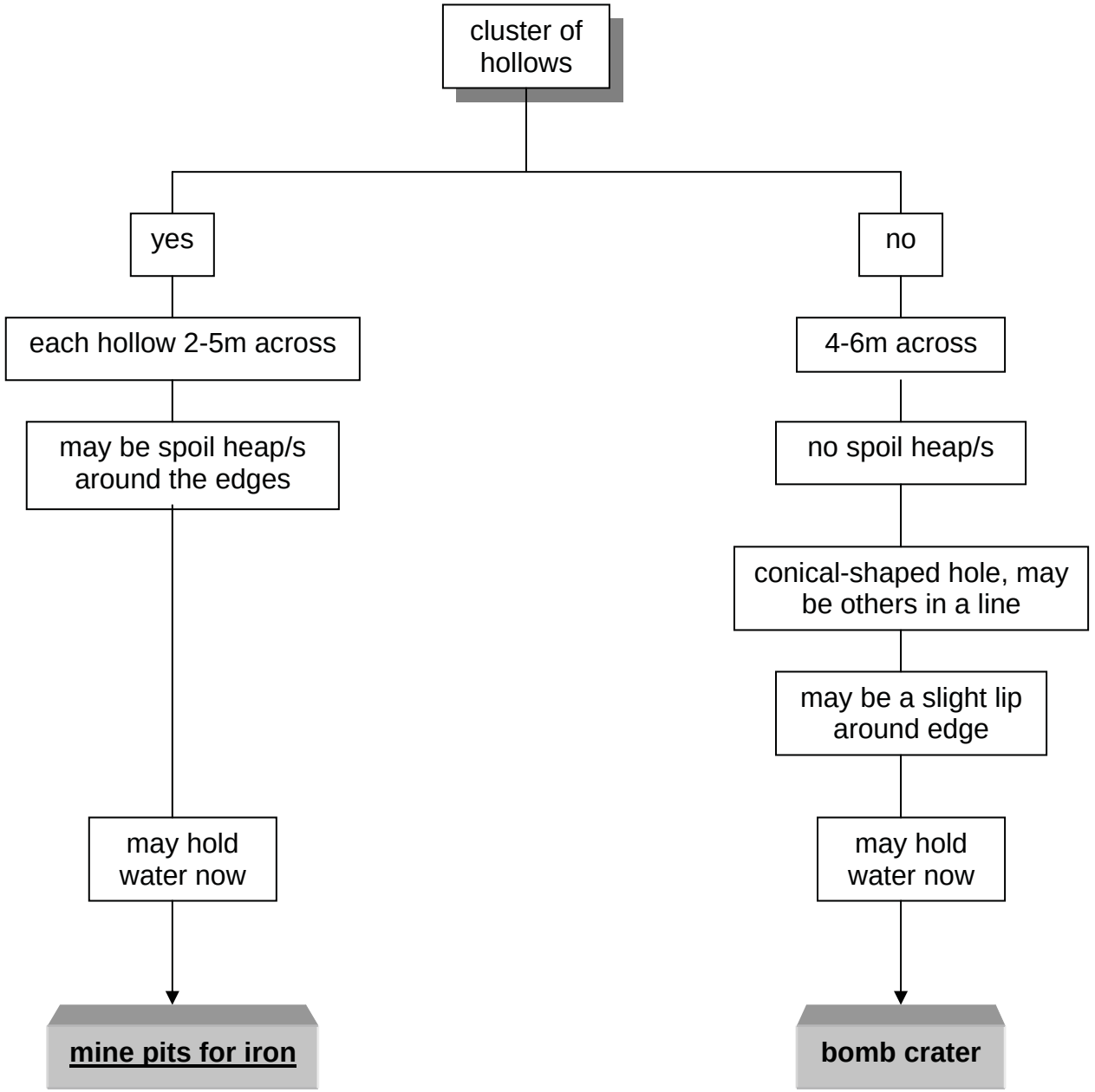
MOUNDS – not circular



MOUNDS - not circular

Pillow mounds were built to farm rabbits for their meat and fur

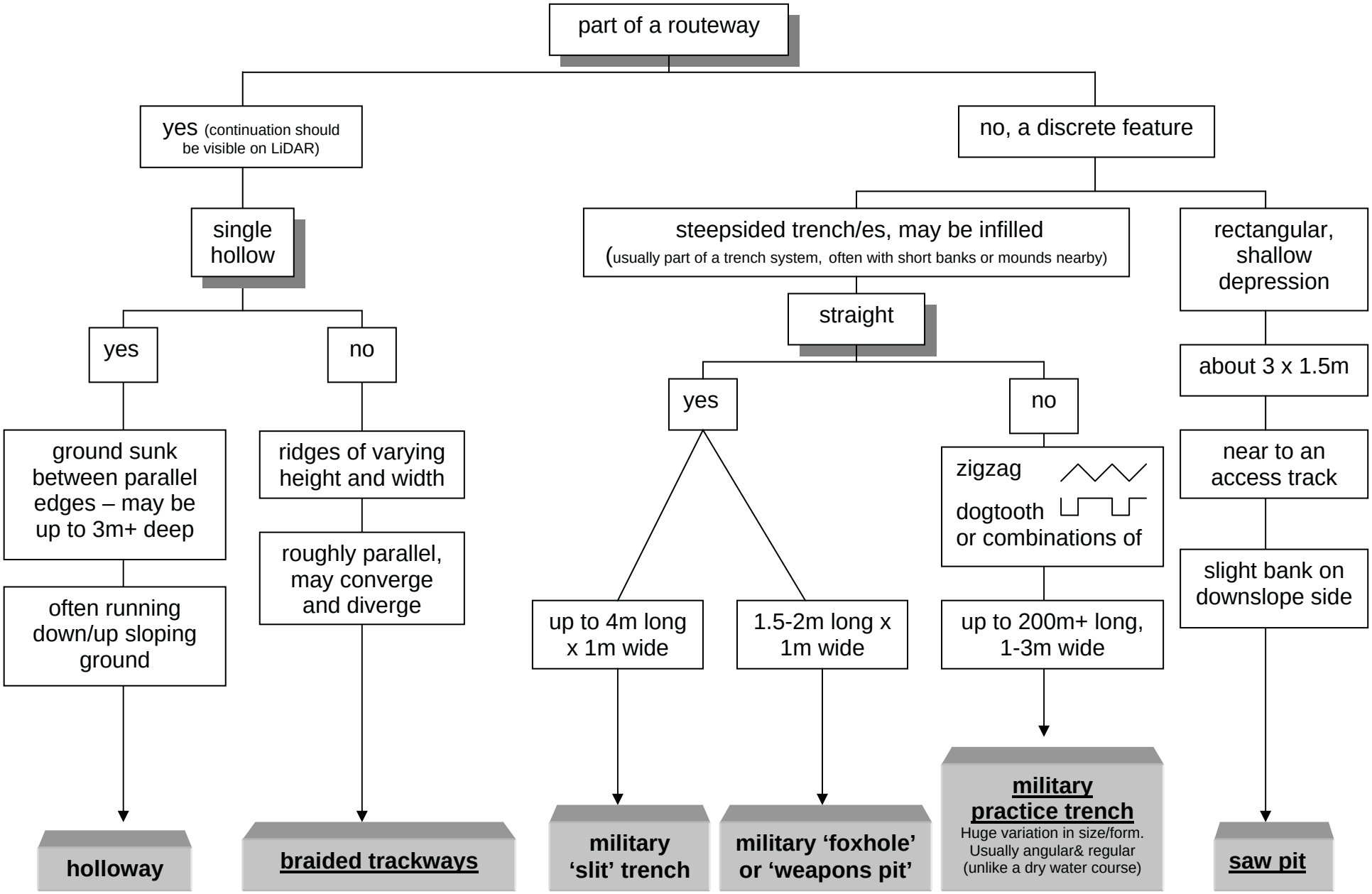
HOLLOWS - circular



HOLLOWS - circular

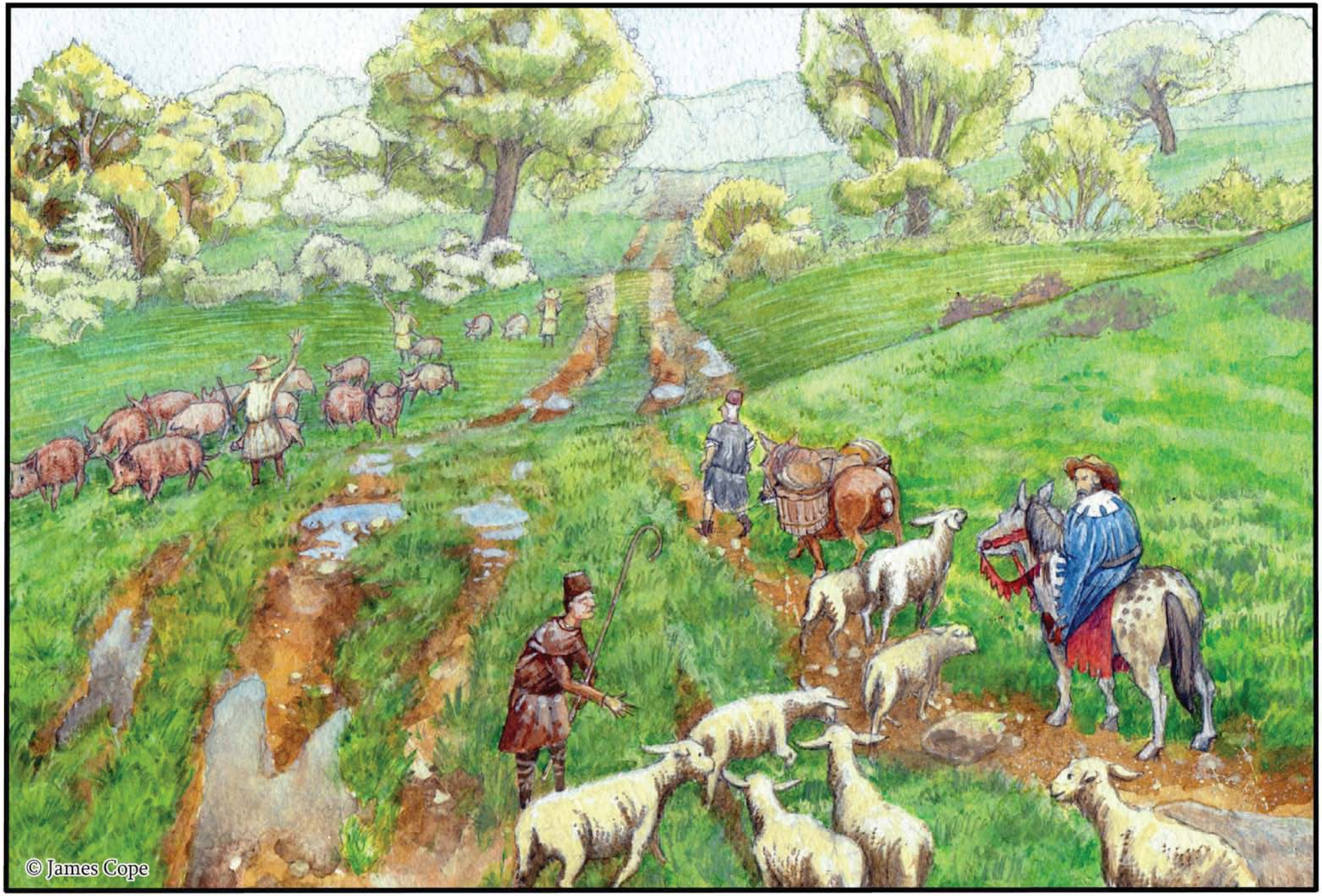
Iron ore was mined from many small holes clustered together

HOLLOWS – not circular



HOLLOWS - not circular

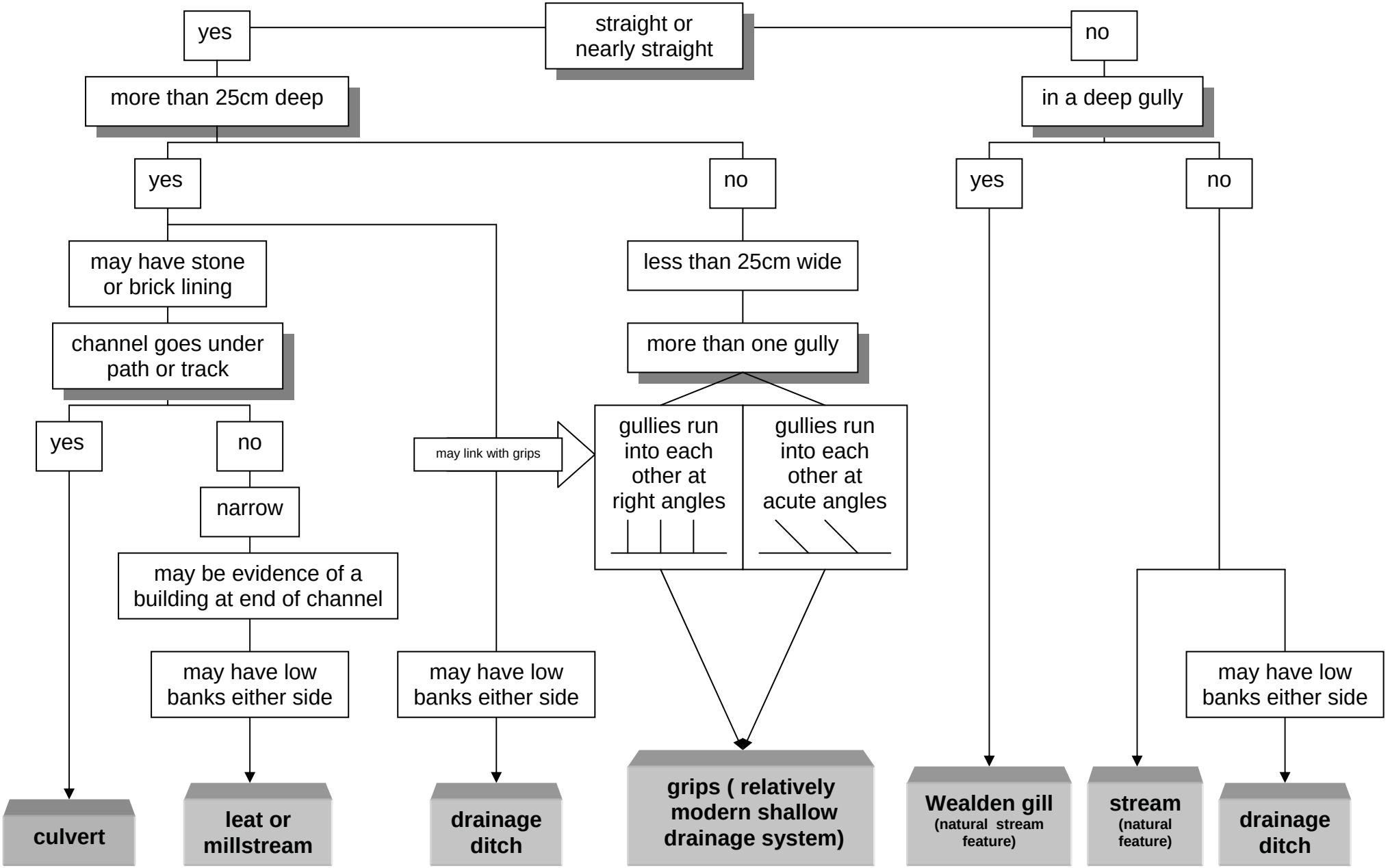
Saw pits were used to cut timber to size, by the ‘underdog’ and ‘topdog’

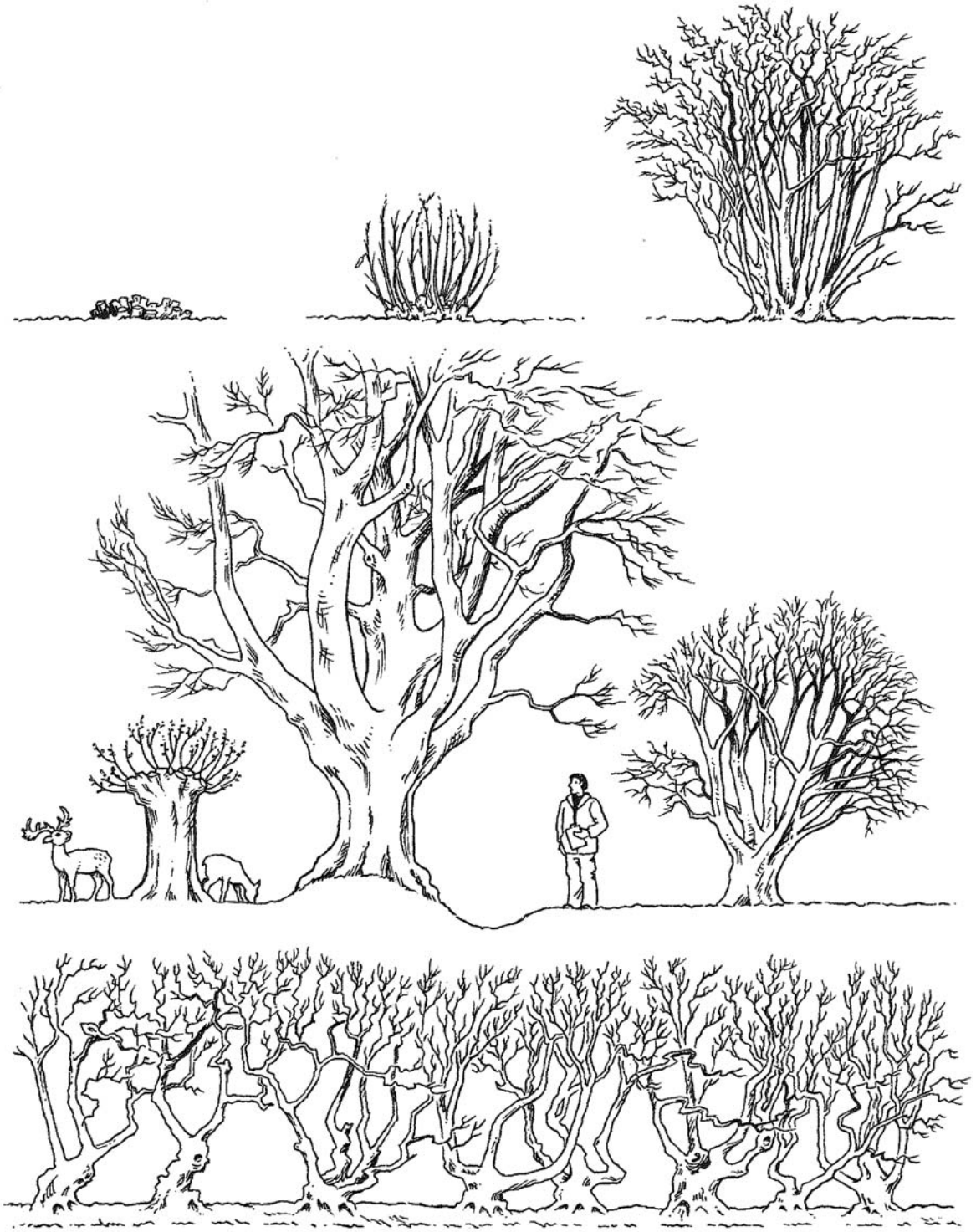


HOLLOWS - not circular

Braided trackways were created by travellers migrating sideways to avoid ruts and mud

WATERCOURSES, DITCHES & DRAINS (may now be dry)





SIGNIFICANT TREES

Top:

coppice stools, l to r – newly cut, young re-growth, mature re-growth

Middle:

left – pollarded tree, new re-growth out of reach of grazing animals

centre – outgrown pollarded tree

right – a ‘stub’, cut at a height between coppice and pollard often used as a boundary marker

Bottom:

grown out laid hedge