THE GLASTONBURY ZODIAC.

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The Glastonbury Zodiac

Phase I:

A Review of the Relevant Literature

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Abstract

As a qualifying phase of the proposed systematic study of the purported Glastonbury Zodiac in Somerset, England, an extensive review of the available relevant literature has been conducted. These major topics were investigated: the validity of the claimed topographical boundaries of the Zodiac; a general survey of zodiacal origins; and the directly relevant cultural history of ancient Britain. Little convincing evidence was found to substantiate the existence of a terrestrial zodiac in this location. However, a number of ancillary findings suggest that there are a few more plausible mystical aspects of this area that may merit further study.
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Introduction

This report summarizes the results of the first phase of a proposed study of the purported Glastonbury Zodiac. An extensive literature survey was conducted over a four-month period commencing mid-January, 1984, to assess the available spectrum of scholarly and popular publications relating to terrestrial zodiacs in general, and the Glastonbury Zodiac in particular, to determine if a more comprehensive on-site investigation of the topic was merited.

Three persons have actively participated in this phase of the project: Susan Intner, a Princeton alumna, '79; Jensine Andresen, an undergraduate in the Department of Civil Engineering; and Jeremiah A. Farrington, Assistant Dean of the School of Engineering/Applied Science. Eric Jahn, '79 and Michelle Kriegman, an undergraduate, also made valuable contributions to the project, which was carried out under the guidance of Robert G. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne of the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research laboratory.

This phase of the project had three major thrusts:

1) An attempt to verify the topographical boundaries of the effigies alleged to comprise the Glastonbury Zodiac;

2) An investigation of the origins of zodiacs and their associated symbolic representations;

3) A review of the available documentation on the cultures of pre-historic Britain.
The bulk of the bibliographical and cartographical resources were obtained through the Princeton and Columbia University libraries and their inter-library loan services. Additional materials and information were supplied through various public library systems. Discussions with academic colleagues here and in Great Britain also proved helpful.

The results of these investigations can be summarized as follows:

1) **Topographical Boundaries**

A number of ordnance survey and other maps,\(^{(1)}\) dating back to the 18th century, were studied in an attempt to verify the boundaries of the zodiacal effigies proposed by Maltwood,\(^{(2)}\) which are based on a variety of natural and man-made geographical configurations. Attempts were made to reconstruct the various constellation figures by applying Maltwood's topographical descriptions to the 1782 Day and Masters map\(^{(3)}\) and to the 1822 Greenwood map\(^{(3)}\) of the Somerset area with no success, and to modern maps with only partial success. Comparisons between the modern and pre-20th century maps were made to confirm the historical existence of the various roads, fields, streams, etc. which comprised major features of Maltwood's figures. There were numerous inconsistencies, particularly with regard to roads, many of which appeared to be of relatively recent origin.

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1. References 29, 40, 49, 62, 63, M2-M6, Appendix A
2. Reference 83
3. References M6 and Appendix A
The outlines from Maltwood's illustration of the zodiacal figures were used as an overlay for two of the older maps, which had been reduced in size to achieve a uniformity of scale. Thus a direct cartographical comparison between Maltwood's effigies and topological features shown on the older maps could be made. Except for the "Phoenix", little conformity was observed between the two.

One additional exercise involved asking several individuals not involved in the project to examine unmarked maps to determine whether "figures" were discernable. Once again, the only consistently recognized pattern was the "Phoenix."

Much of the work of subsequent authors on the Glastonbury planisphere demonstrates either a complete skepticism,\(^4\) or an unquestioning acceptance\(^5\) of Maltwood's geographical boundaries for the figures. Additional authors who accept the existence of the planisphere\(^6\) question some of the effigy boundaries or characterizations, while accepting others. Caine\(^7\) has substantially redrawn certain of the figures, totally altered others, and found still new effigies. Caine's boundaries, purportedly substantiated by aerial photographs, are unconvincing and appear to be almost arbitrary in their delineation.

\(^4\) References 18, 71
\(^5\) References 75, 76, 105
\(^6\) References 17, 85, 92, 94-98, 101, 105, 124
\(^7\) References 30, 85, 101
A re-evaluation of these proponents' analyses raise considerable doubt as to the geographical credibility of a physical zodiac, particularly since it is known that until the modern era, southern England, including the Glastonbury region, was subject to periodic flooding and other climatic changes.\(^{(8)}\) As a result, over the past 5000 years much of the Somerset area was frequently under water and substantial portions of it comprised swamps and peat bogs.\(^{(8)}\) In the middle ages, monks from the Glastonbury Abbey carried out a drainage program to rid the area of swamps. There is some evidence that at least one earthquake, in approximately 1270 AD,\(^{(9)}\) may have had substantial impact on the local geography. Finally, urbanization over the past 150 years, as well as human intervention in the determination of the boundaries of woods and fields, which may have begun in Neolithic times,\(^{(10)}\) make it difficult to accept the present day existence of a planisphere landscaped as early as 2700 BC, as Maltwood suggests.

2) Zodiacal origins

In addition to pursuing verification of the Glastonbury planisphere's topographical boundaries, an investigation of the origins and history of zodiacs was undertaken in order to obtain

8. References 10, 29, 32-36, 50, 62-64, 67, 72, 73, 99, 100, 109
9. References 58, 125, M2
10. References 36, 50, 55, 72, 73, 81, 100, 109
some understanding of ancient astronomy and zodiacs, and thereby to evaluate the feasibility of the existence of a formulated zodiac in prehistory in general, and British prehistory in particular.

The word 'zodiac' comes from the Greek phrases zōdiakos kyklos, "circle of animals," or ta zōdia, "the little animals", used to describe the band in which the constellations, often visualized as animals, crossed the paths of the planets.\(11\) Readings on the origins of the zodiac\(12\) are contradictory about the originating culture or era. It seems reasonably certain that the concept of a zodiac was common to diverse prehistoric cultures,\(13\) and there are strong arguments supporting both c.4000-2000 BC\(14\) and c.300 BC\(15\) as dates of origin. However, hierarchical questions such as when and where celestial constellations were originally perceived; which culture(s) originated the ideas of the zodiacal path and a circular zodiacal pattern, a 12-house zodiac, a standardized zodiac divided into 12 houses of 30° each, or the 12 specific constellation depictions alleged at Glastonbury; and which culture transmitted each part

\begin{enumerate}
\item Reference 129
\item References 7, 12, 21-25, 31, 42, 55, 59, 61, 67, 70, 71, 81, 85, 101, 105, 110, 116, 126, 129
\item References 7, 24-25, 31, 59
\item References 7, 21, 31, 70
\item References 12, 24, 42, 110, 116, 129
\end{enumerate}
of this heritage to other cultures, are all as yet unre-
solved. A comprehensive examination of these issues would
require a level of background and original research well beyond
the scope of this study.

The topographical configurations attributed to the
Glastonbury zodiac appear to be those associated with the Greco-
Roman zodiac, c.300 BC, and the older Phoenician, Babylonian
(or Chaldean) and Egyptian zodiacs upon which the Greek version
was based.

No convincing direct correspondences have been found
between the arrangement of stars defining the celestial constel-
lations, and notable or exceptional features of the landscape
comprising their hypothetical counterparts in the Somerset
planisphere. Often the stars do not fall on the corresponding
effigy at all. Although many of the images representing a given
zodiacal constellation differ from culture to culture, the
Glastonbury zodiac does not reflect any astronomically correct
configuration, and in fact presents incorrect placement of
several of the constellations, as well as incorrect constella-
tions themselves. For example, Libra is represented as a dove
and placed in the center of the zodiac; Cetus, the Whale, not
usually considered part of the zodiac, is located between

16. References 7, 24-25, 31, 42, 59, 67, 70, 85, 101, 105, 110,
116
17. References 30, 85, 101, 105
Aquarius and Pisces; and Orion, a constellation not included in the Greek zodiac, is positioned in Argo Navis, a constellation of the southern hemisphere, here visualized as a ship, which Caine considers to represent Cancer. Caine's many alterations and additions to Maltwood's planisphere (18) serve only to increase doubts about the legitimacy of the depictions ascribed to the Glastonbury zodiac.

These differences initially suggested other feasible hypotheses: that the Glastonbury zodiac illustrates a variant or forerunner to the Greco-Roman zodiac; or that it is not a zodiac at all, but simply a large-scale grouping of effigies similar to the works of the Nazca Indians in Peru. (19) Both hypothesis were found to be without demonstrable merit, however, primarily because topological proof of the effigies themselves is almost always lacking, and because other kinds of substantiation rely upon highly subjective interpretations of "traditional" evidences. Sympathetic authors on terrestrial zodiacs (20) frequently utilize mythology, folklore, literature and the putative history of place names, as both demonstration and explanation of the similarities and the discrepancies between the Glastonbury zodiac and other known prehistoric characterizations of deities, heros, legends, constellation and zodiacal representations, etc.

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18. References 30, 83
20. References 11, 17, 27, 30, 75-76, 83, 85, 92-98, 101, 105, 106, 124
These rationalizations are largely adequate and inconsistent. For example, Caine argues that Cancer and Libra are purposefully misplaced, disguised (a ship and a dove respectively), and out of correspondence with their stars, in order to illustrate select mythological and Christian concepts, i.e., "to sum up the message of the whole Zodiac, as Jesus' two commandments [revealed in Deuteronomy, according to Caine] summed up the other ten. It is the story of Creation and its purpose."(21) According to Leader, (22) Cancer and Libra are absent, the dove is simply an additional figure, and the grouped effigies of a giant child, a boat, a griffin and a little dog probably substitute for Cancer and Gemini.

Since the equinoxes fall within Taurus and Scorpio in her depiction of the Somerset zodiac, Maltwood dates it to 2700 BC on the basis of the 26,000-year cycle of precession, (23) but other evidence to support this date is lacking. The Romans, rather than the Greeks and Chaldeans, were the first to separate the stars of Libra into a distinct zodiacal constellation, which could well date the Glastonbury planisphere to a post-Julius

21. Reference 30
22. References 75-76, 124
23. References 83;
On Precession in General
12, 21, 23, 24, 42, 55, 59, 67, 71, 105, 116
Caesar period. Maltwood claims that the similarity between the names Sumer and Somerset provides evidence for a Sumerian settlement in Somerset and the origin of the planisphere. Other writers do not concern themselves with the specific time period in which the planisphere was presumably landscaped.

3) Cultural history

A brief review of the literature on pre-Roman (prehistoric) Britain was undertaken to provide a contextual background against which the purported earthworks of the Glastonbury zodiac might be assessed.

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24. References 85, 101
25. References 83, 85, 96
26. References

On Archaeology/Antiquary
1, 3, 6, 13, 21, 23, 26, 28, 36, 37, 39, 40, 50, 55, 58, 60, 62-67, 71-74, 76, 95, 99, 100, 109, 111, 113, 127, M2, B1-B14

On Mythology/Religion/Druids
2, 8-11, 17-23, 27, 28, 32-35, 43, 49, 51-53, 55, 56, 61, 69, 78, 79, 82, 87, 89, 90, 92, 104, 105, 110, 117, 123, 126

On Arthurian Legends
1, 4, 5, 19, 22, 57, 58, 66, 70, 84, 88, 102, 103, 114, 117
Julius Caesar's description of the prehistoric Briton as an ignorant and primitive hunter-gatherer\(^{(27)}\) has been traditionally accepted by many historians and archaeologists. This impression is supported by a relatively large number of physical artifacts from Bronze Age (c.2000-500 BC) and Iron Age (c.500 BC-43 AD) human activity.\(^{(28)}\) However, little direct substantiation has been obtained of the lives and knowledge of Druidic and "pre-Druidic" occupants of Britain.

Any theory concerning a more advanced civilization in Britain flourishing prior to the Bronze Age has long been obstructed by the absence of physical evidence of a written language, the rarity of typical archaeological artifacts such as pottery, utensils and tools, and the scarcity of accepted scientific recognition and analysis of the various megalithic structures which abound in Britain. The oral history and traditions encompassed in the Welsh triads\(^{(29)}\) and other sagas,\(^{(30)}\) though commonly attributed to much earlier periods, were probably not written down in full until the twelfth century AD, and thus do not satisfactorily mitigate the need for tangible evidence.

\begin{align*}
27. & \text{References 2, 37, 64} \\
28. & \text{References 3, 10, 17, 18, 20, 29, 31, 32-35, 39, 50, 60, 63-66, 72-74, 99, 100, 104, 109, 111, 113, 127} \\
29. & \text{References 22, 33, 35, 43} \\
30. & \text{References 28, 51-53, 57, 61, 62, 68-70, 78, 79, 82, 87, 102-104, 114, 117}
\end{align*}
Nonetheless, some conventional academic researchers are currently in the process of re-evaluating existing theories and archaeological artifacts relating to early British culture.\(^{(31)}\) Several lines of evidence strongly suggest a far more complex and sophisticated Neolithic culture (c.4800-1700 BC)\(^{(32)}\) than previously thought possible. Recent finds of crop husbandry, field use, and purposeful land clearance and regeneration\(^{(31)}\) imply a more advanced and stable agriculture.\(^{(33)}\) Radiocarbon and pollen techniques date artifacts such as the Somerset levels (wooden trackways or roads through the peat bogs) and wood henges to as early as c.3200 BC.\(^{(34)}\) The emergence of new evidence of the extensive astronomical knowledge embodied in Stonehenge and other megalithic monuments indicates the large-scale application of celestial analysis and engineering concepts. Such monuments imply the existence of an advanced, and possibly stratified society, since the construction of megaliths presumably required the accumulation of a large body of data prior to its use in the design and construction of the various stages of each monument, and the ability of a society to sustain workers uninvolved in the gathering and production of food, clothing and shelter.

\(^{31}\) References 50, 67, 73, 81, 109

\(^{32}\) References 7, 67

\(^{33}\) References 23, 50, 81, 109

\(^{34}\) References 39, 50, 73, 109
The extraordinary, incompletely understood configurations such as hill forts, tumuli, stone circles, cairns, barrows, and chalk figures which appear throughout Britain,\(^{(35)}\) testify to the existence of at least one complex early culture. There is some evidence that the use of major earthworks as burial sites in some cases occurred long after their original construction.\(^{(36)}\)

At various but as yet uncertain periods, religious worship in Britain is believed to have been directed to deities represented by horses, bulls, the "White Goddess", and other magical figures.\(^{(37)}\) The construction of Christian churches, often dedicated to St. Michael, on sites sacred to the indigenous Britons\(^{(38)}\) (Celts, "pre-Celts", Druids, "pre-Druids", etc.), may be an indication of which areas and constructs were important to these prehistoric inhabitants, and why. Modern-day ley-hunters, geomancers, and amateur antiquarians have applied this association between sacred Christian and pre-Christian sites in Britain

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35. References 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 21, 26, 29, 31, 39, 40, 49, 55, 58, 63, 65, 66, 71, 73, 78, 92, 94, 95, 101, 105, 113, M2, M5

36. References 50, 72, 73, 100, 109


38. References 1, 2, 18, 62-64, 85, 99, 102, 103, 117
as one kind of evidence to support theories concerning the continuity of mystical/spiritual knowledge from prehistoric times through the present, \(^{(39)}\) albeit often in less than scholarly fashion.

The infusion of Christian precepts, symbols, and rituals\(^{(40)}\) couple with the Arthurian legends\(^{(41)}\) to obfuscate further any indigenous pre-Roman cultural attributes. Yet a literal application of the Arthurian legends -- themselves of controversial and doubtful historical accuracy\(^{(41)}\) -- is a cornerstone of the favorable evaluations of the Glastonbury zodiac.\(^{(42)}\) Maltwood\(^{(43)}\) envisions the planisphere as an embodiment of Arthur, his Round Table, and the associated legends. Caine\(^{(44)}\) and Leader,\(^{(45)}\) also with little convincing evidence, go a step further and argue that the Glastonbury zodiac illuminates the myths and legends of a much larger number of cultures and identifiable time periods.

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40. References 2, 4, 20, 32-35, 57, 70, 72, 73, 99

41. References See footnote 26: On Arthurian Legends, also 32-35

42. References 17, 23, 30, 75, 76, 83, 92, 105, 124

43. Reference 83

44. Reference 30

45. References 75, 76
Nevertheless, the plethora of myths, legends, and early epic traditions associating the Glastonbury region with ancient Avalon, King Arthur and Merlin, Joseph of Arimethea and the Holy Graal, and other historical or semi-historical personages and events, (46) testifies to the significant historical importance of this area. It has drawn the attention of writers and historians such as Julius Caesar, Geoffrey of Monmouth, John Dee, and others since early times. However, with the exception of Dee, who may have described the discovery of zodiacal effigies in the sixteenth century, (47) we found no historical mention of a zodiac or planisphere associated with the area.

46. References 57, 58, 62, 91
47. References 44, 45-48, 54, 107, 108
Conclusions

Within the limited scope of this literature survey little convincing physical evidence has been found to substantiate the existence of a terrestrial zodiac at Glastonbury, such as that proposed by Maltwood, Caine and Leader. Although their claims may have aesthetic appeal, they are not well supported by the geographical or historical sources accessed in this study, but depend more upon relatively oblique or symbolic associations. The major discrepancies found among the individual, subjective descriptions of the various zodiacal configurations by the several proponents of the planisphere hypothesis may well be the strongest argument against it.

Although many intriguing ideas concerning historical and symbolic implications are presented in discussions of the Somerset and other terrestrial zodiacs, there seems to be little substantive basis for these extremely subtle interpretations and anomalous correlations. The vagueness surrounding the chronological and cultural sources of the zodiacal concept further complicates any efforts to place the hypothetical Glastonbury formation within an historical or cultural context.

Finally, given the multitude of myths, legends, esoteric writings, and documented archaeological studies associated with the Glastonbury region, all of which suggest prehistoric cultures with close religious and pragmatic bonds to nature, and many of which contain direct references to specific natural landmarks in the vicinity, the omission of any explicit references in the traditional early literature or oral records to a zodiac per se
or to a similar configuration of such immense scale and implication appears irreconcilable.

Recommendations

The paucity of physical or historical evidence to support the existence of a terrestrial zodiac at Glastonbury does not necessarily totally invalidate the concept proposed by Maltwood and others. It should be noted that in essence any zodiac or constellation is a proposition, rather than an objective physical phenomenon, which the mind of man has found useful or stimulating in ordering the proliferate astronomical display into meaningful or mnemonic patterns. In this sense Maltwood's perception can also be considered as an attempt to project onto the physical domain a subjective interpretation of this particular locality. She was not the first to do so, although the particular pattern she employed may be different from those of most of her predecessors.

For example, a biography of John Dee\(^{(48)}\) (1927-1608), geographer, astrologer, mystic, mathematician, philosopher, and diplomat in the service of Queen Elizabeth I, quotes, without citation, Dee's description of peculiarities in the form of certain Somerset hills in and around Glastonbury that led him to make or commission maps which, in turn, displayed zodiacal figures. Unfortunately, it was not possible to locate either Dee's original text or copies of his maps.

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48. Reference 44
The proliferation of legends, myths, and religious and historical artifacts associated with Glastonbury and its environs testifies to an enduring mystical aura associated with this vicinity, which might be deserving of further study in somewhat different terms. For example, there are a number of well-established physical features that might prove to be more amenable to scientific investigation.

Much of the evidence reviewed in this study suggests that the effigy of the Phoenix, encompassing the town of Glastonbury, Glastonbury Tor, and Chalice Hill, actually exists. Unlike the other figures, this one is clearly defined by variations in ground contour, rather than by more transitory roads, waterways, or field boundaries of questionable historical origin, and it is clearly apparent on the various maps we have studied. Whether it is wholly a natural phenomenon or whether man has also had a role in its design is still uncertain. (49) Nor is it known whether it may be one of Dee's figures. It is possible that this very large effigy is not simply a natural curiosity, but an actual prehistoric artifact. If this were the case, we would be dealing with an earthwork of a size and kind quite distinct from the more familiar mounds, barrows, tumuli, and hill forts, and other classes of known artifacts, such as the giant chalk figures and the megalithic stone configurations.

49. References 17, 30, 75, 76, 105, 106
Also of substantial interest is Glastonbury Tor, a hill carrying an ancient Christian chapel on its crown, that appears to support a labyrinth on its slopes rather than the common concentric terracing, suggesting that the human manipulation had some spiritual or religious purpose, rather than construction for defense or agriculture. The spiral, helix, and labyrinth are motifs common to many cultures in both the eastern and western hemispheres, and have been found incised on human and animal bones dating as early as 20,000 BC, and in succeeding millennia as petroglyphs and as decorations on pottery, metalwork, cups, and buildings. These symbols are so ubiquitous that they may be a universal and fundamental pattern, perhaps in the sense of a Jungian archetype of human consciousness. Among the Hopi and other American Indian tribes the spiral was used to represent the Earth Mother and the migratory travels of the tribe, and to symbolize its emergence from the underworld to its present location on earth. In Britain, the maypole dances of Saffron, Walden, Alkborough, Sneinton, and elsewhere lead initiates along ritual, labyrinthine paths meant to represent the route from the physical to the spiritual world. Similar labyrinthine forms

50. References 7, 17, 18, 21, 23, 31, 38, 39, 55, 56, 64, 65, 71-73, 76, 92, 105, 106, 128
51. References 21, 31, 55, 65, 67, 118
52. References 17, 18
can be found throughout eastern and western Europe, the Middle and Far East, and North and South America. They have been associated with known cultures as old as ancient Egypt and as recent as medieval France, and have frequently been found in conjunction with the symbol of the doubleheaded axe (Gr. Labrys), a representation often linked with the worship of the Great Mother goddess. In pre-Christian times, Glastonbury Tor was considered the holy hill of the Celtic god of the underworld, Gwyn ap Nudd.\(^{(53)}\)

One could ask whether the terracing of the Tor is in fact a three dimensional labyrinth, perhaps intended by its unknown builders to provide ritual passage between this world and the spiritual domain. 

If these topics are found to merit further investigation, we would recommend that such research address the following points:

1) location and evaluation of the pertinent works of John Dee;

2) assessment of sources and publications unavailable for this study, i.e., the actual aerial photographs of the Glastonbury region, Caine's 16mm film of the area, period maps by the British Ordnance Survey, and many of the more esoteric works relating to Glastonbury;\(^{(54)}\)

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53. References 43, 104

54. Reference Supplementary Bibliography
3) review of the works of pre-20th century scholars other than Dee, to determine whether any other observations were recorded regarding the unusual nature of the Tor, the putative Phoenix, and/or the Tor labyrinth or other such motifs in the vicinity;

4) interviews with appropriate British scholars concerning the Glastonbury effigies, the Tor, recent archaeological and geological studies of the region, and the current state of knowledge regarding prehistoric astronomy in Britain;

5) careful study of the works of Frederick Bligh Bond, who discovered the remains of two ancient chapels in Glastonbury, using the techniques of psychic archeaology (automatic writing);

6) on-site investigation of the Tor and other components of the Phoenix, employing scientific instrumentation, e.g. magnetometers and gravitometers, to test for geological anomalies in the area which might provide some physical basis for the unusual environment associated with the vicinity;

7) on-site investigations of local folklore, museums, and libraries, and inspections of other ancient symbols, earthworks, and constructions, such as the Chalice Well and its reported healing properties.

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76. *-----*, and Jackson, Jannett, compilers, *The Glastonbury planisphere as at easter, 1968*, private compilation. (See commentary, Appendix A)


((#) RILKO: Research into Lost Knowledge Organization)


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M5. Ordnance survey of Great Britain, sheets 165 (Weston-Super-Mare), 166 (Frome), and 177 (Taunton and Lyme Regis), seventh series, one inch to the mile, The Director General of the Ordnance Survey, Chessington, Surrey, 1965, 1967, 1970.


(#) This is one of the maps referred to by Maltwood. We were unable to find many of her demarcations.
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**MAPS**

*Ordnance Survey Maps of Great Britain*, six inch to the mile and twenty five inch to the mile, The Director General of the Ordnance Survey, Chessington, Surrey.

**Period Maps of the Ordnance Survey**

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<td>1962</td>
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<td>Hadrians Wall</td>
<td>1963</td>
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Appendix A

Day and Master's Map of 1782
Greenwood's Map of 1822
Ordnance Survey Map of 1971
Maltwood's Planisphere
Caine's Version of Maltwood
Caine's Planisphere
'Girt Dog of Langport'

Mary Caine's Version of the Maltwood Planisphere