

Mystery of the Long Man of Wilmington (The Wilmington Giant)



LONG MAN
of WILMINGTON

- The **Long Man of Wilmington** or **Wilmington Giant** is a hill figure on the steep slopes of Windover Hill near Wilmington, East Sussex, England. It is 6 miles (9.7 km) northwest of Eastbourne and $\frac{1}{3}$ mile (540 m) south of Wilmington. Locally, the figure was once often called the "Green Man". The Long Man is 235 feet (72 m) tall, holds two "staves", and is designed to look in proportion when viewed from below.



- Formerly thought to originate in the Iron Age or even the neolithic period, a 2003 archaeological investigation has shown that the figure may have been cut in the Early Modern era – the 16th or 17th century AD. From afar the figure appears to have been carved from the underlying chalk; but the modern figure is formed from white-painted breeze blocks and lime mortar.



1710



1776

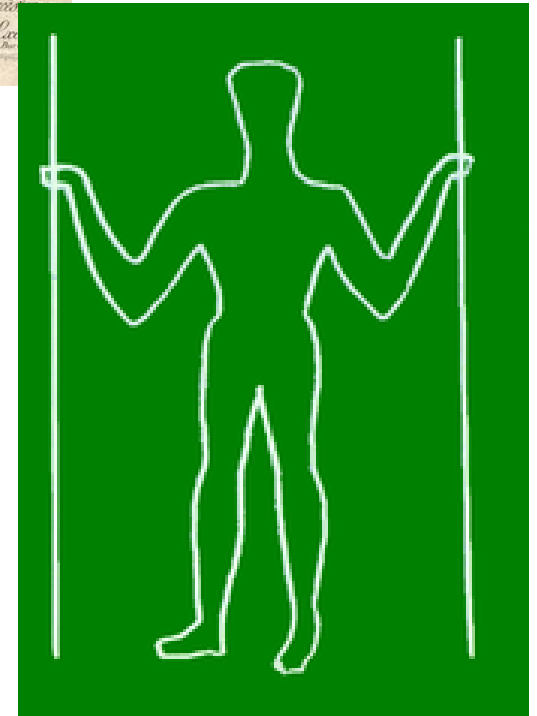


1807



1892

- The origin of the Long Man remains unclear. For many years the earliest known record was a drawing made by William Burrell when he visited Wilmington Priory, near Windover (or Wind-door) Hill, in 1766. Burrell's drawing shows a figure holding a rake and a scythe, both shorter than the present staves. In 1993, another drawing was discovered in the Devonshire Collections at Chatsworth House which had been made by the surveyor John Rowley in 1710, now the first definite date on which the figure is known to have existed.



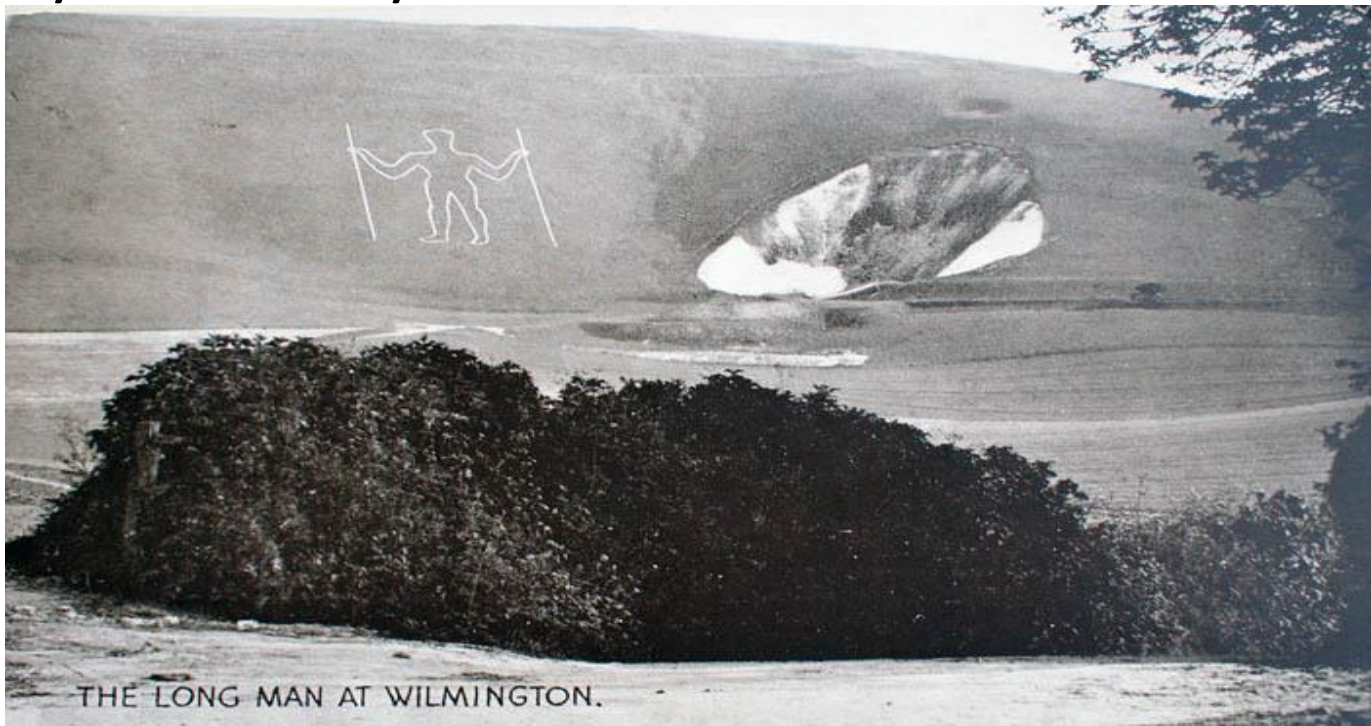
- An early suggestion, sometimes stated to be a local tradition, was that the Long Man had been cut by monks from nearby Wilmington Priory, and represented a pilgrim, but this was not widely believed by antiquarians, who felt that monks were unlikely to have created an unclothed figure. Until fairly recently the Long Man was most commonly asserted to have been cut in the neolithic period, primarily due to the presence of a long barrow nearby, or given an Iron Age attribution based on a perceived similarity to other hill figures.



Until the 19th century the Long Man was only visible in certain light conditions and after a light fall of snow, but in 1874 it was marked out in yellow bricks. It is claimed that during this restoration the feet were incorrectly positioned but, despite popular local legend, there is no evidence, historical or archaeological, to suggest that prudish Victorians robbed the Giant of his manhood!



- In 1925, the site of the Long Man was given to the Sussex Archaeological Trust (now the Sussex Archaeological Society) by the Duke of Devonshire. During World War II, the figure was painted green to prevent enemy aviators using it as a landmark. In 1969, further restoration took place and the bricks were replaced with pre-cast concrete blocks that are now regularly painted to keep the Long Man visible from many miles away.



- The lack of firm historical evidence still leaves many theories abounding about his history. Many Sussex people are convinced that he is prehistoric, other believe that he is the work of an artistic monk from the nearby Priory between the 11th and 15th centuries. Roman coins bearing a similar figure suggest that he belonged to the 4th century AD and there may be plausible parallels with a helmeted figure found on Anglo-Saxon ornaments.



Left: Thor from the Møgeltönden Horn



Right: 7th century Plaque showing Beowulf and Grendel from Torslunde, Sweden

