



Fig 6.6 The low-lying Ure-Swale Interfluve showing the alignments of henges relative to the Devils' Arrows. The distribution of possible mires is based on historic place-name evidence and the extent of lake sediments as shown in Bridgland et al 2011, fig 1.5. The location of springs is taken from OS 1:25,000 Sheets SE27/37, SE26/36 and SE28/38. © Crown Copyright/database right 2013. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service

struction of a cursus, and renewed again by henges dedicated to the 'very ancient tradition of the Sacred river' and an associated 'archetypal creation rite' (A C Thomas 1955, 445). If water was closely associated with spirits and sacredness, and the springs with an underworld, this could have been good reason for repeatedly returning to this location. Just as today, water from special places may have been especially significant to travellers. There is surely little doubt that water possessed spiritual connotations, for elsewhere it was the context for many deliberate acts of deposition during the Neolithic, like the large number of stone and flint axes from the River Thames (Bradley 1990, 57ff). It is impossible to say whether similar finds exist in the

Ure – whose name, suggestively, derives from the Celtic 'isura' meaning 'holy one' (Ekwall 1928, 427) – but four specimens, including three from Cumbria, have been found from the edge of the area of intermittent woodland and marsh immediately to the north of Thornborough (Fig 6.7; 5.5). As objects of exchange they may have been appropriate 'gifts to the gods', and their deposition even accompanied by human bone (see Bradley and Gordon 1988, 508; Harding and Healy 2007, 113–17, 227). However, evidence of this is lacking across both the Ure-Swale Interfluve and further afield in the Yorkshire vales, where human remains are extremely rare until the 2nd millennium BC. If at least some of the dead did find a watery grave here, either as intact bodies or in