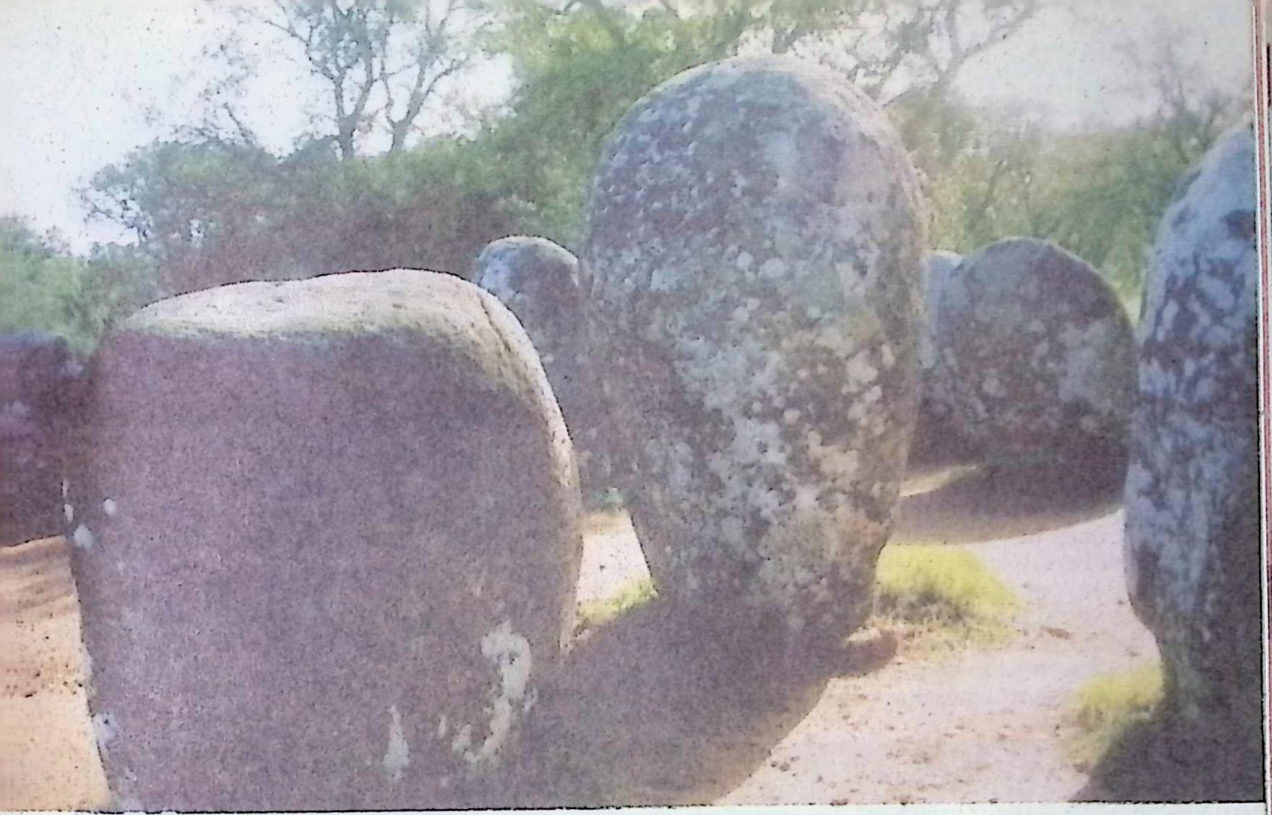


Elliptical stones offer the beauty of simplicity.



Groves of cork oak, west of Evora, Portugal.

hills, cork groves and olive plantations. It can be assumed it was grateful for the megalithic pathway laid out for comers to the Cromlech and relished the chance to pose for the camera, there on the little bridge, here by a menhir. It's not always that the bicycle kept record of its tours.

One hundred menhir stones, eight hundred tombs called dolmens and four hundred and fifty megalithic village sites: there are a lot of numbers to take in as the bicycle reaches the village of Guadalupe. There's a lot to contemplate in the final strides along the dirt road towards the Cromlech and there's time to be taken to take in the simple circles of curved stones. The bicycle waits for its rider to eat the few snacks.

The country west of Evora, no doubt is favoured by its megalithic jewellery which came to that place perhaps because of its potential for astronomical alignment or perhaps because it's in that country where all the watersheds of the Alentejo region's three rivers, the Tagus, the Sado and the Guadiana, meet.

The bicycle does not neglect the largest menhir, 1400 metres to the northeast, standing isolated and alone, and at 4.5 metres, standing tall. The bicycle continues to the Anta Grande do Zambujeiro near Valverde village, knowing what to expect: a basic chamber, a room of rock slabs that might have had burial or religious purpose.

As the sun descends and the elliptical shadows lengthen, the bicycle has learnt its solar signal and turns its back on the cromlech and with an ever heavier turning of its wheels heads for home. It arrives at the bicycle shop bearing that weariness of the accomplished kind that actually feels good. The sort of reward for the day of the returning to simplicity is a sense of clarity brought about by circular wheels and pedalled satisfaction. ■

PHOTOS: ANDREW EAGLE