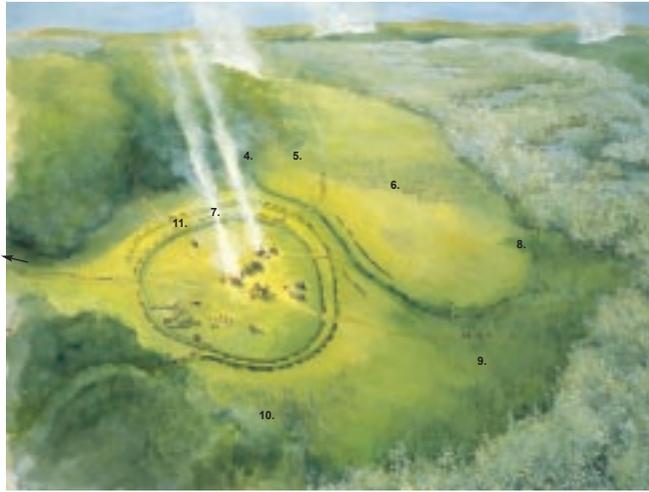


## Possible scenes at the Neolithic causewayed enclosure, nearly 6000 years ago



### The tribal meeting ground

Distant fires and stumps show where woodland is being cleared. Like many other lowland sites, the meeting ground is on dry gravelly land close to river and marsh – important for rituals and a wide range of foods throughout the year.

The meeting ground is enclosed by a low bank, outside which are ditches and pits of differing lengths. People may gather here for many reasons - marriages, seasonal festivals, cattle fairs, and ceremonies relating to death and the ancestors.

Life is tough and uncertain and feasts are important. Animal bones, pottery from feasts, and often human bones or infant burials are placed in the ditches – possibly as ritual offerings to the Earth.

A funeral ritual is underway for the dead young man on the platform, and people arrive with cattle and pigs to kill and roast. He will join the ancestors, who watch over the tribe's well-being.

### The marsh in the valley

The boy paddles silently through the marsh in his coracle, fishing and hunting for birds or beaver, and collecting wetland plants. With a lifespan of perhaps just 40 years, boys rapidly gain adult skills.

### At a small farmstead somewhere beyond the woods

The farmer is knapping flint arrowheads and hide-scrapers essential for clothing of deer and cattle hides. He also repairs his axe of Wiltshire flint, used for felling trees.

His domesticated pigs and cattle are much smaller than the wild aurochs and boar. Small plots of wheat are grown, but life is hard, and the fear of crop failure ever-present. Special rituals and feasts take place here at the meeting ground before planting and at harvest time, making offerings to the Earth.

## The Archaeology Walk

The following numbered points are shown on the illustrations and map above, but please note numbers are not marked out on site.

### 1. The western hillfort corner

Beneath the car park lies the western corner of the outer hillfort rampart, 50 metres outside the main gate and inner rampart. A 30m wide Bronze Age ring ditch lay just north of the car park, older than the hillfort and perhaps relevant by its inhabitants.

### 2. The main hillfort entrance

Cross Station Road and turn left along the line of the inner rampart to the entrance of Cemetery Lane. To the left lies the main entrance, a 20 m wide passageway from the garden of Camp House (where Mrs Helen O'Neil lived) to the far side of Station Road. Large gravel ramparts were supported by a metre-thick wall of clay and stone and probably large wooden gates. Interestingly the lane to Greystones Farm originated when the original entrance banks still stood.

### 3. The western ramparts

Follow the inner rampart along Station Road past Camp House, turn into Roman Way and right along Moor Lane. Turn right on the public footpath through the hedge, then left inside and cross the stile. This rampart enclosed the Late Iron Age settlement, with round houses, hearths, ditches and grain storage pits, with three phases of settlement and dense occupation in the Roman period. Saxon burials have been found in this rampart.

### 4. The northern hillfort corner

A diagonal path crosses this small field, where a hoard of 147 Iron Age currency bars was found in the 19th century (before it was illegal to remove finds from the hillfort). The ridge and furrow earthworks may be medieval, formed by cultivation of narrow strips of land. The old field name Seven Lands refers to these strips.



### 5. The tall stone

A remarkable tall stone stands where the footpath passes through the ramparts, possibly a candidate for the *Salmonsbury Stone* that stood by the northern rampart from Saxon times to the 19th century. It was moved during the 20th century, and Helen O'Neil suggests was incorporated in the cowshed at Greystones Farm – yet to be verified. This stone remains a mystery!

### 6. The northern hillfort entrance

Walk along outside the inner rampart, and inside the now-levelled outer rampart, to the gateway in the recent stone wall. This was where the substantial northern entrance stood, possibly including a curving protective hornwork outside the rampart. The main structure stood inside the modern gate, with substantial walls, double gates and possible supports for an overhead structure linking the banks. Excavation found signs of use by wheeled Iron Age vehicles.

### 7. Neolithic causewayed enclosure

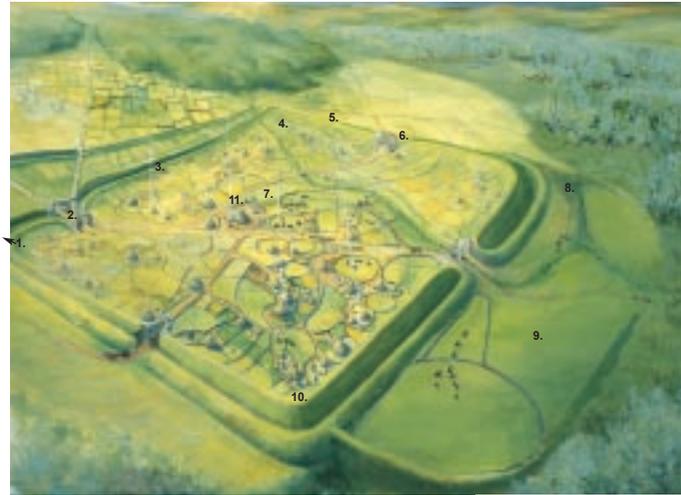
Stand in the gateway at 6 and look over the small stream to the gently-rising land below the buildings. There at 7 geophysical survey has revealed ditches believed to be a Neolithic causewayed enclosure more than 5000 years old. The stream may have been significant in the Neolithic

## Possible scenes 3000 years later around 100BC, in the Late Iron Age hillfort

The hillfort was built in the first century BC – a massive project organised by people with influence. Double ramparts of gravel are supported by dry stone walling and flanked by ditches. Large double gates control the entrances.

On the far left is the earlier Iron Age village, abandoned now that people have moved into the hillfort where there are many advantages. It is fairly level and dry for buildings and farming, yet has ample water in stream and springs, and fine round houses with spacious compounds and paddocks.

Livestock and crops are safer here, protected from wolves, deer and rustlers. The whole landscape is farmed by the hillfort



### Feeding the community

The Iron Age plough turned the soil over for a better seed-bed with fewer weeds.

A woman pours harvested wheat into one of many storage pits. When full it will be sealed with clay, a simple technology that keeps food in perfect condition all winter and is essential for the community's survival. Occasional burials in old pits may or may not be ritual offerings to the Earth's fertility.



residents, including the square fields in the distance, and woodland close by. Near the marsh the protected annexe has secure grazing, and controls the way to the marsh for rituals. Even the marsh is now drier, and is grazed through much of the summer.

### and later....

With such advantages it is not surprising that the hillfort was occupied right through the Roman period. Incoming Saxons however may have shunned Romano-British settlement areas, preferring to develop villages nearby.

### An Iron Age hunting party

The Iron Age was a time of fast ponies and fearless driving skills – as demonstrated by charioteers during the first Roman invasion. Perhaps fine ponies were bred and traded at Salmonsbury.



### Weaving

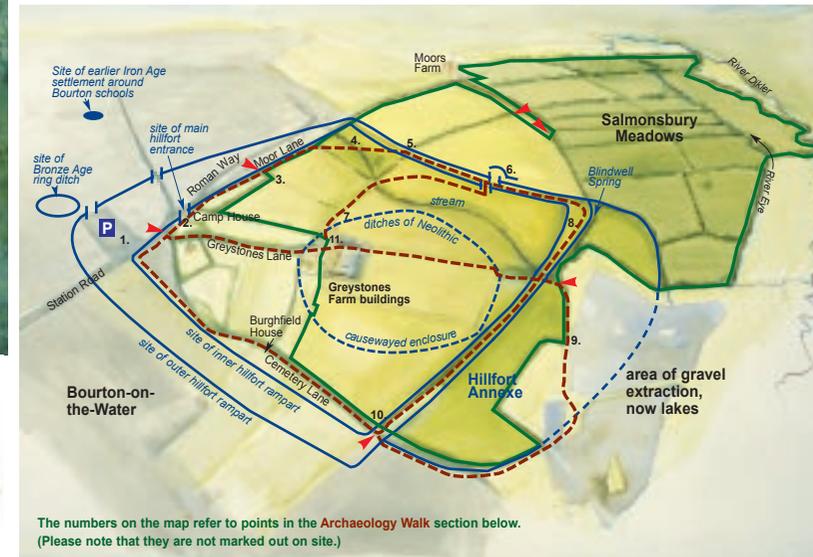
With large numbers of sheep, people wear fine woollen cloth. The loom stands in a doorway for maximum light, with stone weights to keep the warp taut. The weaver firms the weft with a bone comb found at Salmonsbury.



## The present day...

Much of the surrounding area is now built up, including the western ramparts, and unfortunately a large part of the annexe was destroyed by gravel extraction in the 1960s.

Map Key	
	Reserve boundary
	Archaeological features
	Archaeology Walk
	Reserve access points



The numbers on the map refer to points in the Archaeology Walk section below. (Please note that they are not marked out on site.)



The northern rampart as it is today

monument, and have supplied water for the later hillfort. Either walk down to 7 and on to the buildings, or turn and continue along outside the rampart to the eastern hillfort corner.

### 8. The eastern rampart and hillfort annexe

Around the corner lies part of *Blindwell*, an uneven field. This is the site of *Blindwell Spring* (now piped) possibly used in ancient times. The ramparts have slumped here and at the far end disturbance has obscured a possible eastern gate into the annexe. This large D-shaped area is lower but still above the marsh, and has curving Iron Age banks at each end. The area was drastically altered by 1960s gravel extraction and deep drainage works on the farm.

From Neolithic times this marshy area may have been of ritual and economic significance. The banks are from the earliest Iron Age phase (dated from a human burial in the bank) –



View from the buildings to the eastern rampart and annexe, with possible view in Iron Age times.

possibly "causeways" through the marsh, a protective bank for cattle and crops, or even ritual use.

### 9. The impact of gravel extraction

To see the full impact of extraction (although now a beautiful area) take the public footpath through the small wood. Once out of the Reserve and into the Lakes you will appreciate how much of the Annexe was destroyed. Finds in the area of the Lakes have included a snake-headed bronze bracelet and a small stone altar – hinting at possible offerings in Iron Age or Roman times. Sadly we will now never fully understand the story of the Annexe.



Small Romano-British altar found during gravel extraction

### 10. The southern corner and south-western rampart

Reaching the rampart corner at 10 on Cemetery Lane, to your left Saxon burials were found in the curving annexe bank in the 1850s. Much of the inner rampart falls steeply from Cemetery Lane, but down below the outer rampart has been levelled. Follow the lane northwest to Burghfield House, where a Romano-British cemetery was found. Further on, fork left onto the footpath to the car park. (Or continue further along the Lane to the Cemetery, where a high-status Roman building with underfloor heating was recorded.)

### 11. Greystones Lane and buildings

Turn right up Greystones Lane to the farm. The area around 11 is much obscured by buildings, yet the geophysics and finds provide evidence of intensive settlement in this whole area, from the Neolithic through the Roman period.

Stand for a moment and look across the fields towards the northern hillfort entrance. Just try to imagine the view and atmosphere in the heyday of the hillfort, surrounded by the gentle bustle of farming and domestic life.