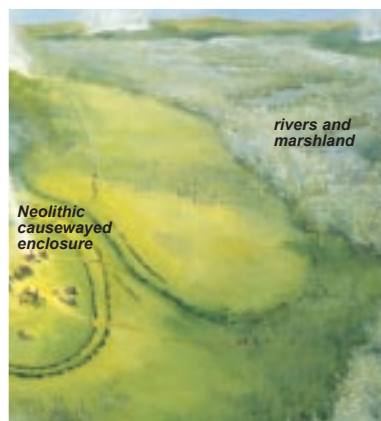


Archaeology at Greystones Farm



The impact of gravel extraction

In the 1950s and 60s large-scale gravel extraction took place in low-lying land around Bourton-on-the-Water, utilising a 35,000 year old gravel deposit for 20th century roads. Although the industry created the now-beautiful gravel pit lakes, it destroyed evidence of our ancestors at this unique archaeological site.



Marsh in the valley during the Neolithic period, over 5000 years ago



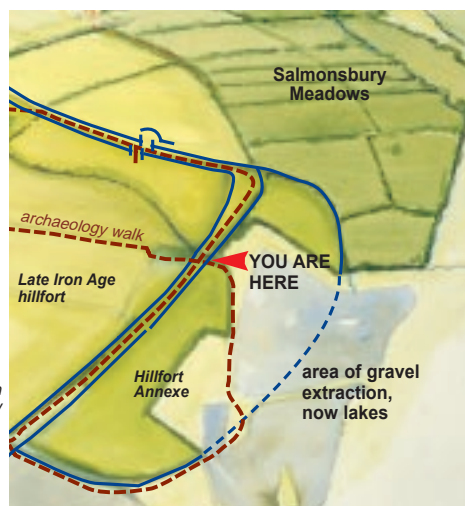
The same area in the Late Iron Age showing the hillfort annexe

From marsh to meadow in later times

As the marshland became drier hay meadows developed – vital to Bourton people for over 1500 years. In the mid-20th century however the use of hay declined and gravel was in demand, offering a profitable alternative. Unfortunately extraction was destructive, both to archaeology and the hay meadow habitat.

The valley in prehistoric times

Over 5000 years ago Neolithic farmers located their mysterious causewayed enclosure on higher land where Greystones Farm and Bourton-on-the-Water are now located. In the valley marshland and rivers provided valuable food and were probably important in their rituals. 3000 years later, in the 1st century BC, a remarkable Late Iron Age hillfort was constructed here. A bank surrounded the hillfort annexe, the area between the marsh and hillfort, probably to keep cattle and crops secure and protect the way to the marsh – still a significant resource.



The same area in the present day

Why does this destruction matter?

These areas offered a unique opportunity to understand our ancestors' economic and ritual relationship with the land and marsh.

During extraction a snake-headed bronze bracelet and small Romano-British stone altar were found close to the hillfort – remarkable finds that suggest possible ritual deposition in the marsh in the Iron Age or Roman period. However important evidence is often much less "robust" and will have been destroyed during gravel extraction.

The hillfort stream still passes through this wet copse to the annexe, but large ditches have diverted the water to the new lakes. Follow the boardwalk and out onto the public footpath through the Lakes, and try to imagine this important area as it was 2000 years ago.



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For fuller information about the Archaeology and Meadows Walk routes please phone for our Greystones Farm leaflets or visit our website www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk

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