

# Archaeology at Greystones Farm Nature Reserve



Gloucestershire

**Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is the outstanding champion of wildlife and wild places.**

- 73 Nature Reserves (2500 acres / 1020 ha.)
- Working with local communities, land managers and organisations
- Events and Education
- Wildlife Watch for the young
- Over 19,000 Members and 300 Volunteers
- Member of the national Wildlife Trusts partnership

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Registered Charity No. 232580 - Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

The Trust depends on membership subscriptions and the support of many volunteers to maintain Greystones Farm Nature Reserve.

- Please join the Trust as a member
- Please volunteer for a range of tasks.

The Trust is grateful for the support received from English Heritage through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund provided by Defra.



Supported by the National Lottery through the  
**Heritage Lottery Fund**



Walking through these peaceful fields you see little evidence that Greystones Farm has been a focus of human activity for nearly 6000 years! Our Archaeology Walk will enable you to follow in the footsteps of our ancestors who chose this place so very long ago.

Limited excavations and geophysical surveys reveal that Salmonsbury hillfort was inhabited from the **late Iron Age** in the 1st century BC, to the end of the Roman period. They have also found a far older site inside the hillfort - the curved ditches of a **Neolithic causewayed enclosure**, perhaps in use over 3000 years before the Iron Age hillfort. Our illustrations of life in those early times are based on these sources, as well as knowledge from other sites, but have also required much "educated guesswork" and imagination!

## the Neolithic causewayed enclosure, sometime after 4000 BC

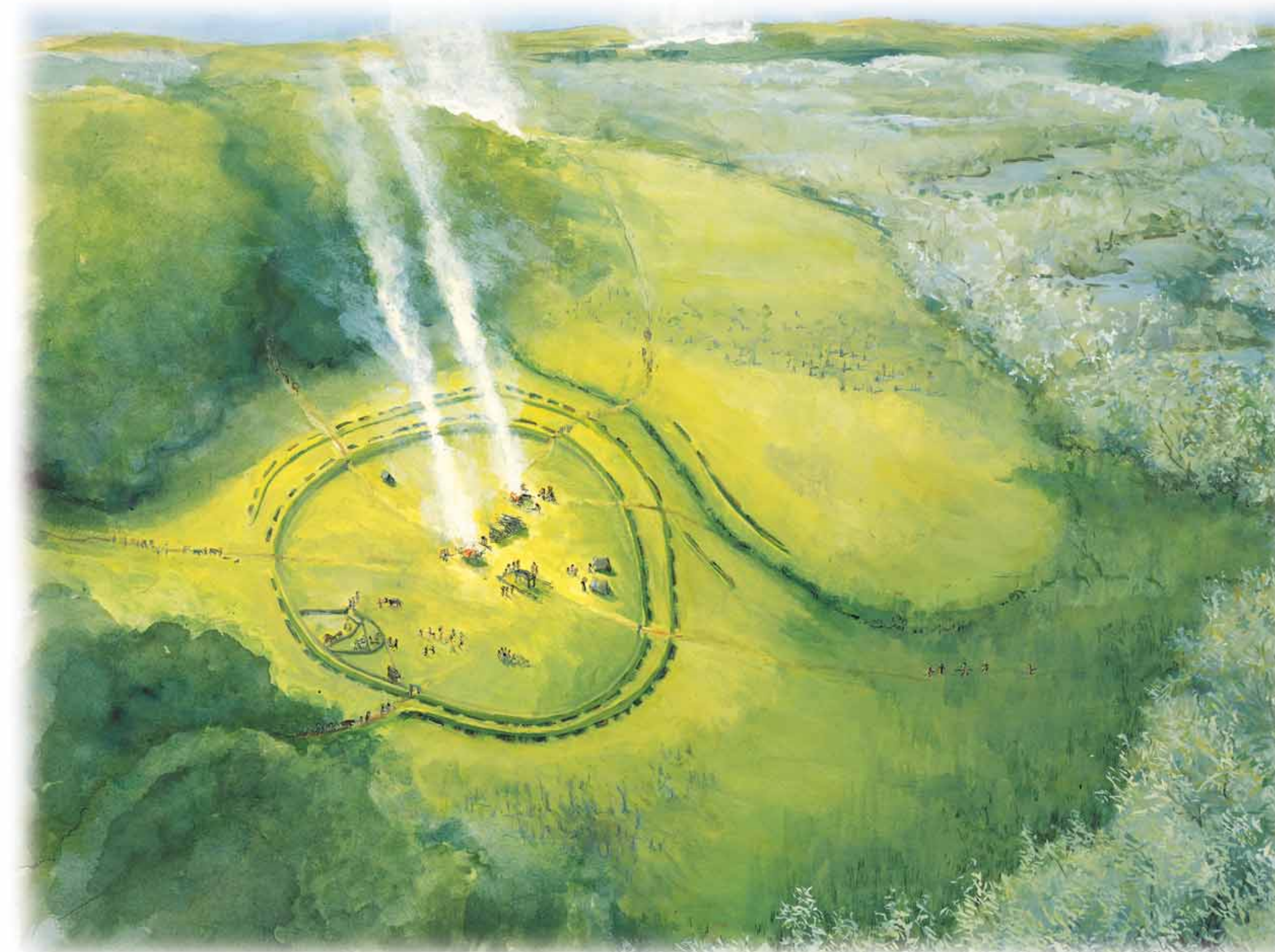
**The Neolithic causewayed enclosure**  
Around 4000 BC farming reached Britain. Early Neolithic farmers cleared areas of woodland to graze livestock and to grow wheat and other crops.

Apparently one Neolithic group chose this place for their **permanent meeting ground**, perhaps for rituals relating to **the ancestors**, feasts, and other social and economic activities.

Like other causewayed enclosures the central area is surrounded by **ditches** that are roughly **concentric** and **fragmented into short lengths**. Elsewhere such ditches contain animal bones and pottery, and often human bones.

**The illustration suggests...**  
*that woodland was still being cleared and burned. The rivers and marshland in the valley were important for beliefs and rituals as well as fishing and hunting.*

*A funeral ritual is being prepared for the dead man on the platform, and people are arriving with cattle and pigs to kill and roast. Feasts were important in such rituals and central to community life.*

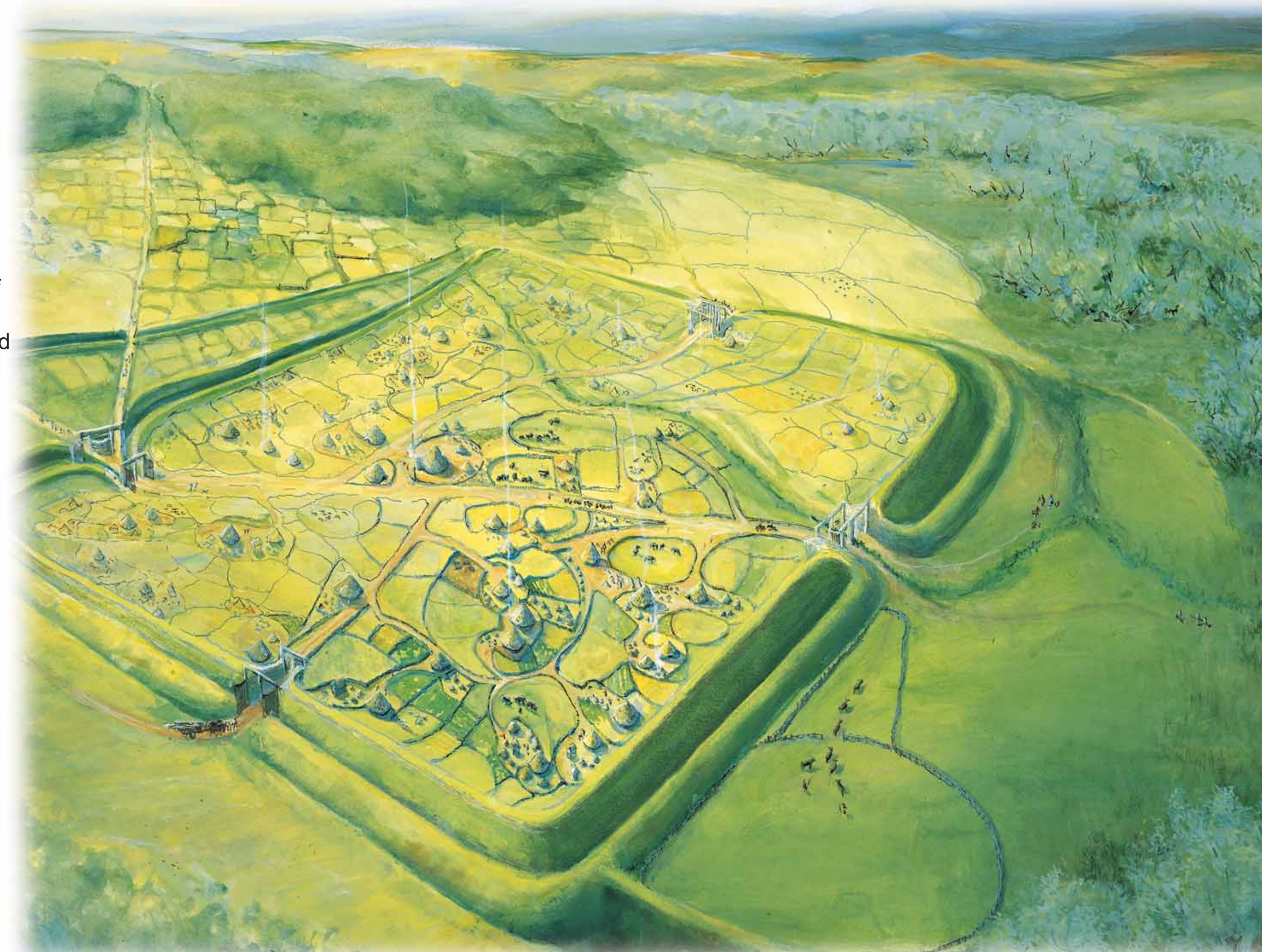


One of a nationwide network of Wildlife Trust nature reserves

**3000 years on, in the late Iron Age**  
Landscape and society had changed greatly. Tribes had prospered through farming, minerals and trade throughout Britain and the Continent. **Settlements** were dotted through the landscape, and this region was controlled by the **Dobunni** tribe.

We do not know who built the hillfort around 100 BC, but it was probably more for **prestige and convenience** than defence. Within 150 years however the Romans arrived, and although the hillfort remained a large community the focus of settlement shifted westwards. Occupation inside the hillfort may have ceased when the Romans left, around 420 AD, and the **Anglo-Saxon** village of Bourton grew up outside the ramparts.

## life in the Iron Age hillfort in the 1st century BC

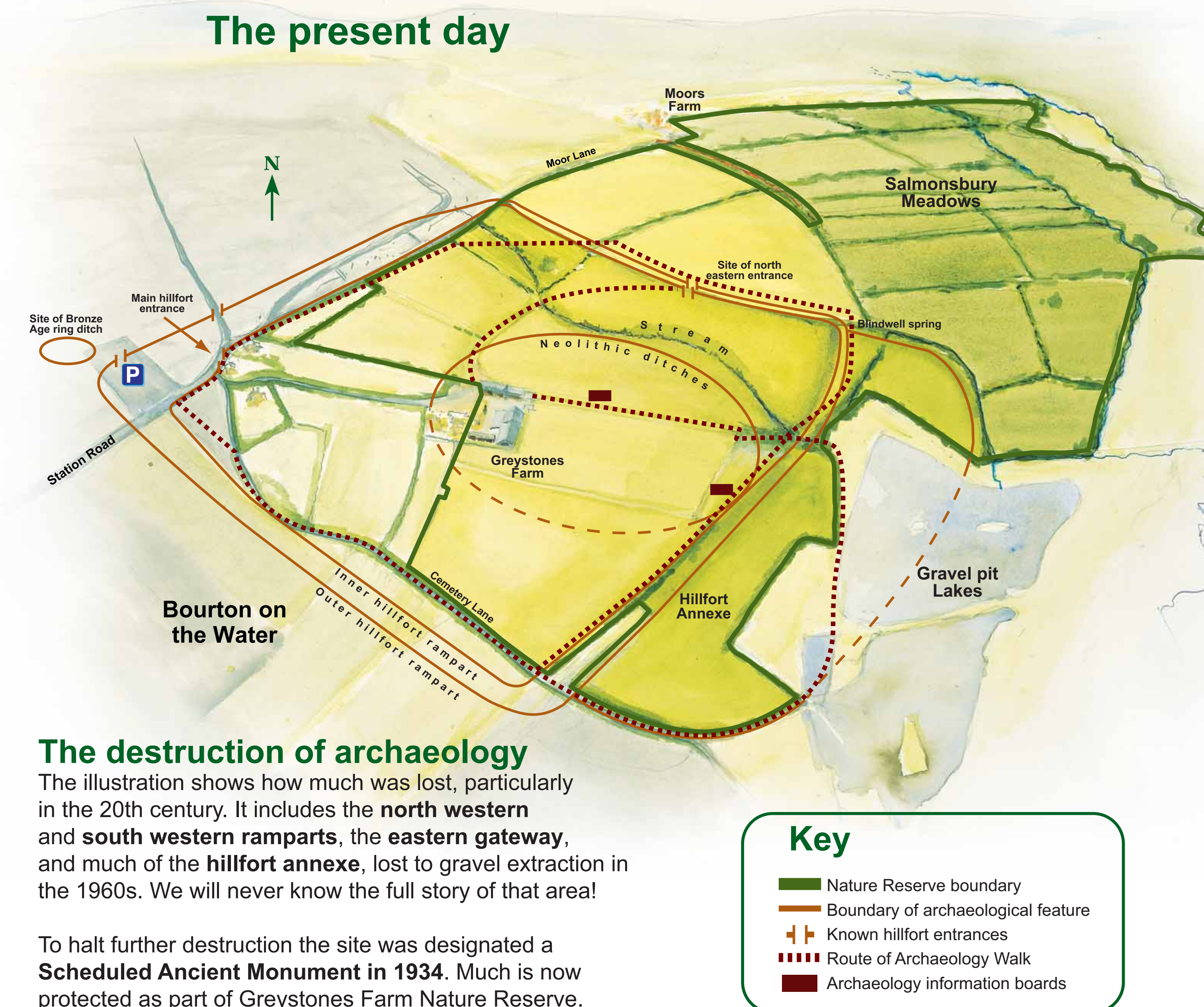


**The illustration suggests.....**  
*that the earlier settlement, in the area where Bourton schools stand today, was abandoned. Cultivated fields and woodland lie close by.*

*The hillfort was a massive construction project, with double ramparts of gravel supported by dry stone walling. It had many advantages – land that was fairly level and free-draining for buildings and farming, with ample water in the stream and springs. Livestock and crops were safer here, protected from wolves, deer and rustlers.*

*Over 3000 years the valley had changed and now much of it was grazed in summer.*

*In the hillfort annexe the curved banks provided secure grazing and marked the route to the marsh, where perhaps people made ritual offerings.*



## The destruction of archaeology

The illustration shows how much was lost, particularly in the 20th century. It includes the **north western** and **south western ramparts**, the **eastern gateway**, and much of the **hillfort annexe**, lost to gravel extraction in the 1960s. We will never know the full story of that area!

To halt further destruction the site was designated a **Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1934**. Much is now protected as part of Greystones Farm Nature Reserve.

## The unfolding evidence

Thankfully **Mrs. Helen O'Neil** of Camp House recorded evidence over a long period, and excavations led by **Dr. G.C.Dunning** in the 1930s greatly increased our knowledge. Finally recent **geophysical surveys** have revealed far more evidence in the Reserve but pose endless questions! Our aim is now to **conserve surviving evidence** until more sophisticated technologies can reveal still more.

## The Archaeology Walk

Our leaflet, **Archaeology at Greystones Farm**, includes a map and fuller information, enabling you to "follow in the ancestors' footsteps".

**Please note** that metal detecting and removal or disturbance of archaeological or other items is **illegal** in the Reserve.