





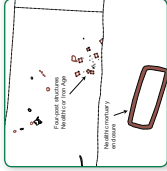
## The archaeological landscape

The route crosses two plateaux divided by a dry valley at Tollgate Junction (A227). Flint blades and microliths (used to make spears and arrows) show that hunter-gatherers used the area extensively. Neolithic finds (4000 - 2500 BC) include a ground granite hand axe, probably from Cornwall, which demonstrates the far-flung contacts of the first farmers. A group of four-post structures found adjacent to a rectangular Neolithic (3500 BC) enclosure (investigated by CTRL) may have been used as platforms for exposing the dead before burial in the enclosure.

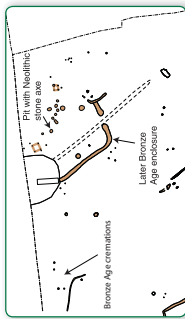


Granite axe

Beaker people, so named after their distinctive pottery, lived close by from c. 2500-1800 BC. A domestic pit containing five broken Beaker pots was found on the western plateau, close to the grave of two Beaker people, which had been found during construction of the adjacent CTRL. The main area of settlement was to the east of Tollgate Junction, where flint tools, Beaker and other early Bronze Age pottery were found.



possibly for a totem pole, were found inside this enclosure. Small finds included a selection of flint tools such as arrowheads, knives and scrapers for hide preparation. The western enclosure contained later Bronze Age pottery dating between 1200 and 900 BC and worked bone axes and flint tools, presumably from leather and textile working. There were cremation burials and a fence outside the enclosure, probably belonging to a contemporary cemetery.



## Iron Age agriculture

Farming expanded in the Iron Age (800 BC onwards), as storage pits and raised granaries (represented by squares or rectangles of posts) were found all along the route. Many of the pits had offerings placed in them before they



Pit with raised and chipped grain

became disused. These ranged from whole pots or quernstones for grinding grain to layers of



Pot in base of pit

of the local people, and also about their rituals and beliefs, iron objects, one possibly the lynch pin from a chariot, were found alongside whole pots in pits dated to the middle Iron Age. In the late Iron Age thin-bronze coins and chalk loomweights add to the variety of offerings, a tradition of belief lasting for nearly 800 years.



Chalk loomweights

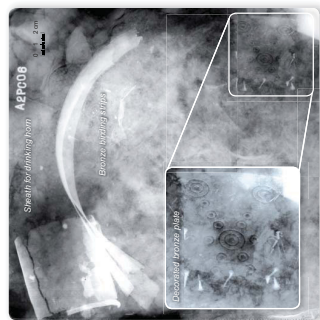
A cluster of enclosures, forming a settlement 500 metres long, developed west of Tollgate Junction during the Iron Age and lasted for about 400 years. Two cremation burials uncovered in this settlement were of people of high status. One contained four pottery vessels and four copper brooches, two of which were joined by a chain. The other cremation contained two pottery vessels, a bucket made from Yew bound in bronze strips with decorated metal plates, and a high tin-bronze cylinder, probably from a drinking horn.



Iron Age coin



X-ray of brooches and chain in cremation grave

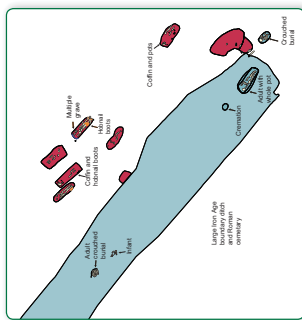


X-ray of bronze-board bucket and drinking horn in cremation grave

Another important find was a cobbled trackway up to eight metres wide crossing the site, a rare instance of road construction before the Roman period.

## Boundaries and fields

To the west of this settlement, a very large boundary ditch was revealed along the edge of the plateau, seen as a crop mark, prior to construction. This may have been dug to lay a stronger claim to territory. Burials were placed in the ditch during the Iron Age, a practice that continued into the Roman period, when a small cemetery grew alongside the ditch. Most of these people were buried between AD 50 and AD 250.



Bronze cauldron with vine leaf decoration

## Roman enclosure at Tollgate

The Iron Age settlement became disused soon after the Roman conquest, possibly when a new rectangular enclosure was established overlooking the Tollgate dry valley and the new Roman road of Watling Street. The southern part of the enclosure was discovered during CTRL investigations and had contained domestic and agricultural features. The route of the new A2 crossed the northern part of the enclosure, which contained a number of cremations and burials.

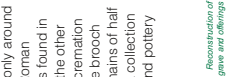
The eastern half of the enclosure contained a two metre square burial pit for a cremation, accompanied by one of the largest groups of grave goods in early Roman Britain. Adjacent to the cremation were the bronze handles of a gaming board and 23 dark blue and white glass counters, a rare find and one of only around 20 similar Roman gaming sets found in Britain. On the other side of the cremation were a large brooch and the remains of half a pig with a collection of bronze and pottery vessels.



Reconstruction of game and offerings

There were three bronze vessels, a large cauldron, a ewer (or jug) and a patera (or pan) used to offer drinks to the gods. These would have been imported from Italy, and very similar items have been found in Pompeii. Arranged around these, and on a table above, were 18 pottery vessels, including flagons for wine, a butt-beaker for beer, cups, jars and dishes, almost all imported from France. Thirteen of the dishes and small jars lay halfway up the grave and below them, in two lines, were rows of decorative bronze roundels with central tacks and rectangular strips of sheet bronze decoration to the front of the table.

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Reconstruction of game and offerings

## Bronze Age enclosures

The earliest lasting settlements were two Bronze Age enclosures. These were found about one and a half kilometres apart, occupying high ground to the west and east of Tollgate Junction. They were small enclosures with deep ditches on the south and west sides and shallower gullies to the east. The eastern enclosure contained little pottery, but dating of the sediments suggests that the ditch was dug around 1500 BC. A possible oval post-ring house, a group of large shallow hollows and a very large posthole,



Beaker pottery from several vessels