

Highbridge area were abandoned in the late third/early fourth century AD, suggesting that conditions started to deteriorate at about this time. The only possible evidence for when the flooding started to subside is the disappearance of the Siger. The phenomena suggest a major disruption of the hydrological regime which, on documentary evidence, took place between AD 693 and 973.

There is no need to regard this late and post-Roman inundation as anything exceptional. The Post-glacial stratigraphy in coastal areas, with numerous interleaved peats and alluviums, shows a long history of cyclical marine transgression and regression, against a general background trend of gradually rising sea-level. The peat stratigraphy from the inland moors similarly shows periodic floods throughout prehistory. The Roman period can be seen as one of these short-lived periods of stability, which people took advantage of and when, for the first time, in one area, they tried to hold back the sea artificially.

Stephen Rippon,
Archaeology Department, University of Reading.

Somerset Levels and Moors, Conservation Archaeologist

The Somerset Levels Project, run for many years by John and Bryony Coles, has handed over responsibility for the archaeology of the Levels and Moors to Somerset County Council. In response the County Council appointed Dr. Margaret Cox to the post of Conservation Archaeologist. The appointment was made in August and the post is co-funded by English Heritage.

Margaret Cox has been employed on the Christ Church Spitalfields Project since 1985 and seems to have moved from bodies to bogs! Her Ph.D. thesis (Institute of Archaeology, London) based on aspects of the Spitalfields Project, was examined in 1989.

The role of Conservation Archaeologist is wide ranging with emphasis firmly on the 'conservation' side. A major concern is to raise the profile of archaeology among agencies involved with water levels in the area, and to enhance their field officers' understanding and recognition of archaeology. Appropriate water level management is crucial, both to the preservation of known archaeological sites and the archaeology that exists within the Wetlands but has not been 'discovered'. Close liaison is underway with nature conservation groups whose interests and concerns are very similar to those of archaeology and a conference on Wetland Archaeology and Nature Conservation is being planned for late 1992/1993.

Site Management in the Wetlands is an important area of concern. An assessment of the success or otherwise of the existing management strategy of the Sweet Track is underway and English Heritage have invited participation from a wide range of experts. The Abbots Way site is to be evaluated via trial trenches early in 1992 and an appropriate management strategy devised. Interesting data should be obtained on, among other things, the effect of trees on the wetland sites.

Economic activity in the area is monitored. The range is wide from general construction type development to mineral extraction applications involving Environmental Assessments and day to day monitoring of peat extraction and agricultural activity. Considerable effort is being given to maintaining the positive image of archaeology established in the area by John and Bryony Coles and their various field officers.

The centenary of the discovery of the Glastonbury Lake Village by Arthur Bulleid in 1892 is being used by County Council archaeologists and the County Museum Service as an opportunity to promote archaeology in the Levels and Moors. The existing Visitor Centre at Westhay is being upgraded and Bulleid and Gray's original site hut has been restored and will be erected at the Visitor Centre. Margaret Cox and Peter McCrone (field archaeologist) are also constructing a small 'Iron Age' settlement, on the Glastonbury model, at Westhay. The intention here is to enhance public awareness of the unique and internationally important archaeology within the Levels and Moors. Already local people are assisting in gathering raw materials and it is hoped to involve local schools.

Margaret Cox,
Department for the Environment, Somerset County Council.

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