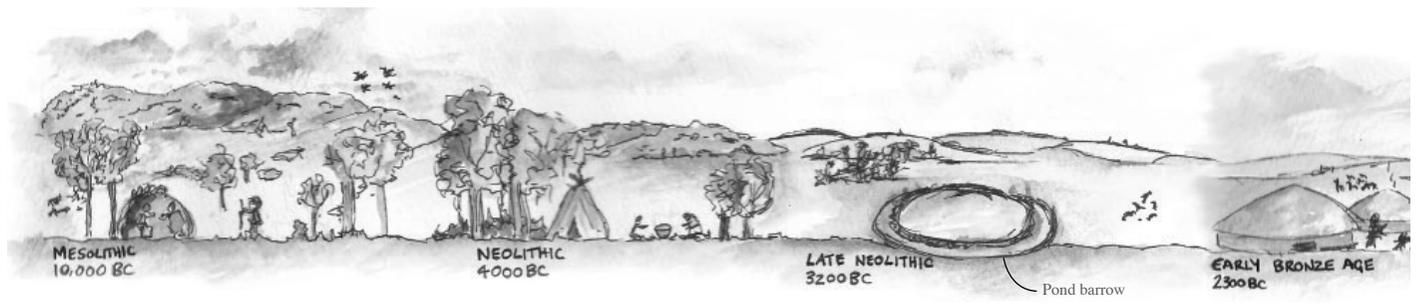


PREHISTORIC DIDCOT

BASED ON FINDS AT DIDCOT WEST

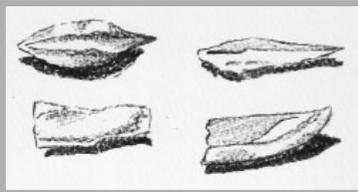


Didcot's ancient history has recently been uncovered in the fields to the west of the town.

A lot more information is still to be reported by house builders on the land, but here is some of what we have been told about so far...

February 2013

12,000 years ago 6,000 years ago 5,200 years ago 4,300 years ago



Mesolithic flint implements
Dating back 9000 years ago



Neolithic bowl
Lain complete and undisturbed for 6000 years, a great example of very early pottery

Pond Barrow
One of less than 100 found in Britain, mostly in Wiltshire and Dorset. There was evidence of a 6 post structure, possibly a table for drying bodies... The future of the site is currently unknown, but it could be built over...

Late Neolithic/early Bronze age high status flint work such as these arrowheads were found at the barrow site

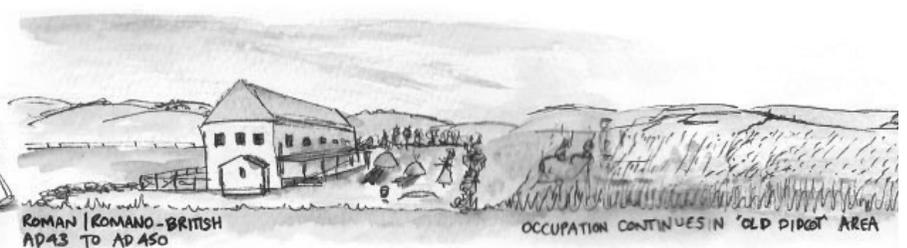


[Didcot] Village tradition says that human sacrifices were offered on a barrow planted with trees on the high ground to the west of the parish.

P.H. Ditchfield and William Page (eds).
A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3.
Published: 1923



2,700 years ago



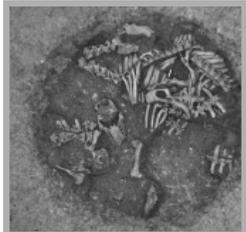
2,000 years ago



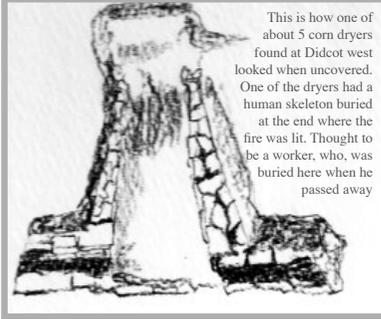
Early Bronze age village
It was unusual to find a village around a barrow, but that's what appeared at Didcot



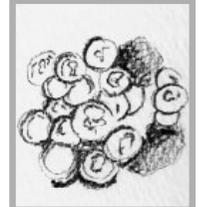
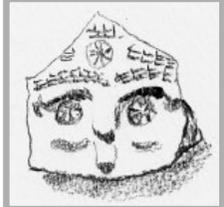
Large Iron age village of 50 to 60 roundhouses and an unusual 8 metre square structure



Pit burials
The pits were originally to store food and sealed with clay. They are around 1 metre deep and 2 metres across. After use many were used to bury animal and human remains in a ritualistic manner. Lamb skulls in a circle, children's bones, cattle were all found in different pits across the iron age village area



This is how one of about 5 corn dryers found at Didcot west looked when uncovered. One of the dryers had a human skeleton buried at the end where the fire was lit. Thought to be a worker, who, was buried here when he passed away

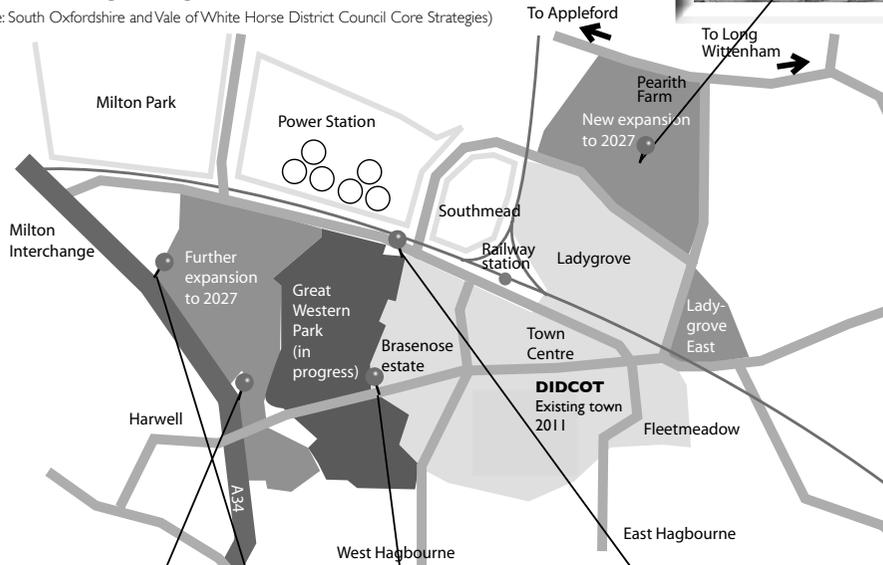
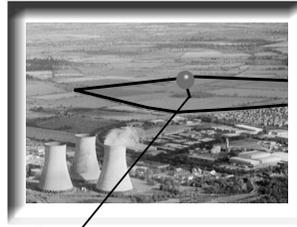


Roman / Romano-British
Pottery, multiple human burials, unusually large number of corn dryers, a villa and gold hoard were all discovered on the site

Didcot to 2027

8,450 new homes are being planned for Didcot in the next 15 years to 2027. If completed it would double the population of the town. The rest of South Oxfordshire, which stretches to Thame and Henley and includes Wallingford and Chosley has been allocated 5,187 new homes. The total number of new homes for South Oxfordshire is 11,000 by 2027, with more planned in the neighbouring Vale of White Horse.

(Source: South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council Core Strategies)



Where would you find 9000 year old Mesolithic flints, a complete 6000 year old Neolithic bowl, a Bronze Age pond barrow, over 50 Iron Age round houses, a Roman dwelling, multiply burials and an ancient boundary?

The answer is in the fields to the west of Didcot.

Archaeological fieldwork results for Didcot West (soon to be Great Western Park housing estate)

The Didcot west site shows vividly the evolution of a landscape through time.

The north of the site is lower lying and included the discovery of the early Neolithic bowl (c.5,600 years old) and a series of Roman drainage ditches of small fields.

An impressive array of archaeological sites were found on the higher ground to the west of Stephen Freeman School. The earliest was a hollow containing Mesolithic flintwork and burnt flint indicating a c.9,000 year old camp location where tools were made by camp-fires.

Several Neolithic pits were also present, but the archaeology is dominated by an Iron Age hillcrest settlement (c2800 to 2100 years old) including 900 or so circular grain storage pits and 40 to 60 post built and/or gully defined roundhouses.

Several boundary ditches and pit alignments define the occupation site. One alignment, a trackway, later became a Roman N/S aligned route running just west of the school playground. Ditched stock and enclosures of late Iron Age (2100- 1950 years old) and Roman (AD43 to AD 410) connect its east side. The track can be traced right across the site and provides a sense of continuity to the present day, as medieval open field system headlands then the post-medieval enclosed landscape reflect its position.

There is a Bronze Age site (c.4200-3500 year old) against the east edge of the site, south of the school. This includes a 'pond barrow' probably used for the exposure of the dead and

other mortuary ceremonies, as well as three roundhouses of a small settlement.

The large area of archaeology at the south end of the site comprises a late Iron Age and Roman farmstead, set within its farmyard enclosures. In the early phases people still lived in thatched round-houses but in the late Roman period a stone and tile roofed villa was constructed. Although this was identified by the works the new oval parks' ('Boundary Park') southern boundary road has been redesigned by Taylor Wimpey to avoid damaging the Roman remains, which will be preserved for the future. The Roman site also included a number of corn-drying ovens (which may also have been used for malting). A Saxon building completes the evidence for settlements after which the medieval parish system and its three-field 'ridge and furrow' agricultural system was developed. The regular patterns of linear furrows are mapped on the plan.

The area excavated so far relate to Phases 1-5 of Taylor Wimpey's Great Western Park (the areas north of Wantage Road). Investigations here are now complete following nearly three years of excavations by Oxford Archaeology (to a project design by RPS and agreed by the County Archaeologist). The results of the fieldwork will be studied ahead of publication.

Includes edited exerts from Rob Masefield summary of the archaeological map at the exhibition. Mr Masefield is the RPS Archaeological Consultant working on behalf of Taylor Wimpey.