

The story of Stanwick Lakes Roundhouse

An important part of the Stanwick Lakes Heritage Trail is the Roundhouse, which has been built overlooking the original Iron Age settlement. The aim of building a Roundhouse was to give visitors a glimpse into the past of Stanwick Lakes and to create a focus for community heritage activities. The two main guiding principles we followed in the reconstruction were that, just as in the Iron Age, we use materials local to the Roundhouse and involve as many people from the community as possible.

The main build took place between January and March 2011, using materials such as ash, willow and reed, all gathered from within walking distance of the Roundhouse. The FOSiLs, Stanwick Lakes' regular volunteer team, built the main structure, hundreds of people at a community event helped to weave the willow walls and local school children daubed the walls. The FOSiLs then returned to thatch the roof, led by an expert thatcher from the local thatching college. Unfortunately, on the day before completion, the roundhouse suffered an arson attack, the roof was destroyed and the walls badly damaged.



Despite this setback, the community rallied round and within days repairs were undertaken (although it was decided not to thatch the Roundhouse with reed again). A temporary hessian roof was created to use on event days, and in May 2011 hundreds of school children enjoyed the first of many Iron Age re-enactment days in the Roundhouse. In October 2011, the FOSiLs completed the structure with a turf roof. The Roundhouse is now a permanent part of the Heritage Trail; look out for events taking place throughout the year.



See the story of the Roundhouse

The full story of the Stanwick Lakes Roundhouse can be seen on DVD. This will be available to purchase at the Visitor Centre from Summer 2012.

Who made the Heritage Trail... and why?



The **Heritage Trail** has been created through 'Rose of the Shires', a three year project which started in 2010 and worked with communities across Northamptonshire to explore, record and celebrate their heritage. 'Rose of the Shires' was led by the Rockingham Forest Trust, who also manage Stanwick Lakes, and was funded by the Heritage Lottery.

The Trail uses stone markers to show visitors where historic settlements were found during the archaeological excavations of Stanwick Lakes. The inspiration for the route comes from Andy Chapman; an archaeologist with Northamptonshire Archaeology, who worked on the original excavations and continues to lead public walks around Stanwick Lakes.

An important aspect of the Trail's development was involving local crafts people. The stones were shaped and carved by trainees from the Stone Masonry course at Moulton College and the bronze resin plaques were made by sculptor Neil Carter who specialises in bronze miniatures and lives and works locally in Raunds.

Stanwick Lakes is a 750 acre countryside attraction and nature reserve in the heart of Northamptonshire's beautiful Nene Valley, and is considered to be one of the region's most imaginative outdoor activity destinations.

How to find us

Stanwick Lakes is situated off the Stanwick roundabout on the A45 in East Northamptonshire between Wellingborough (eight miles away) and Thrapston (seven miles away).



Opening times

March to October.....7am-9pm
November to February.....7am-5pm

No per-head entry fee, but parking charges apply. See website for details. www.stanwicklakes.org.uk

The Heritage Trail at Stanwick Lakes has been made possible thanks to our funders and partners:



Thanks to English Heritage and Northamptonshire Archaeology for images of artefacts used on the plaques.



The Rockingham Forest Trust is an environmental and rural development charity which manages Stanwick Lakes as a social enterprise in partnership with East Northamptonshire Council.



... a breath of fresh air



Heritage Trail



Stanwick Lakes Heritage Trail

Each of the six stones that you will find on the **Heritage Trail** marks the site of an important historic settlement. These were uncovered as part of the major archaeological excavations by Northamptonshire County Council and English Heritage in the 1980s through to the 1990s.

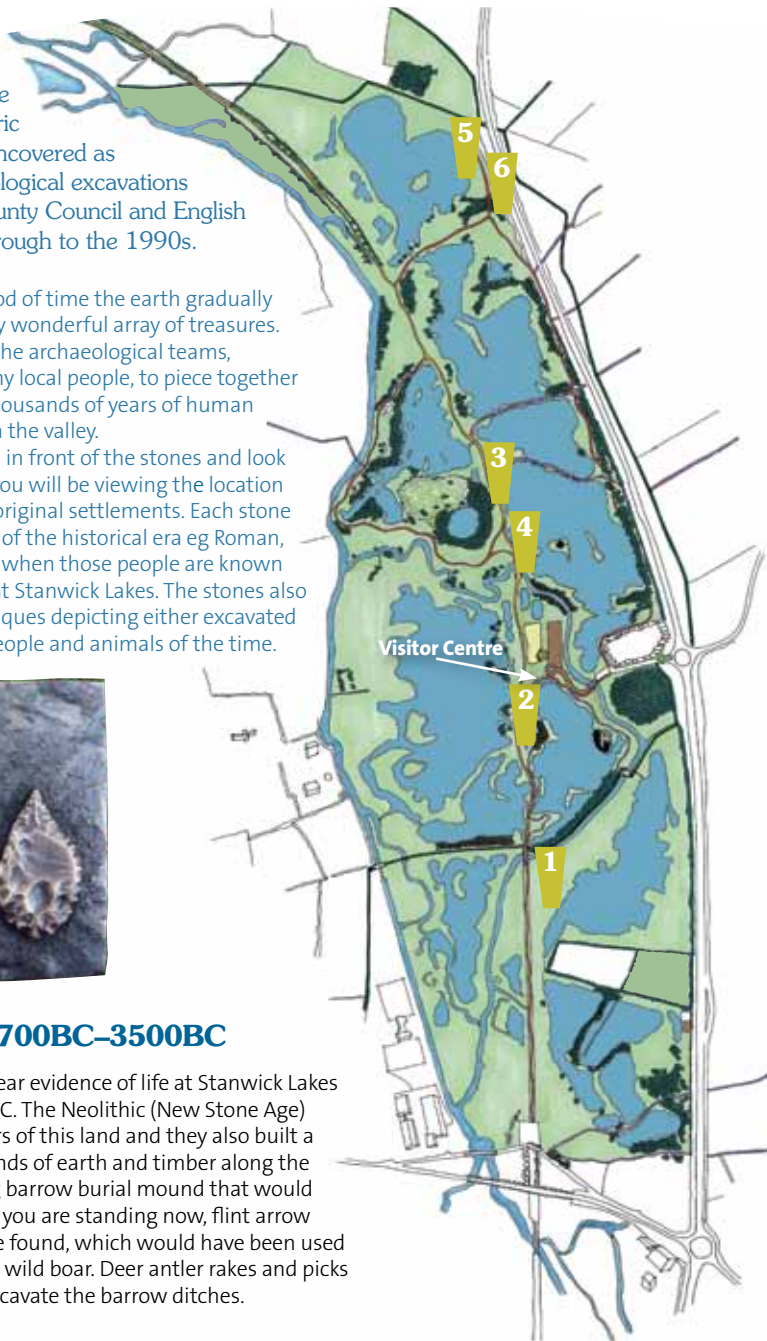
Over this period of time the earth gradually gave up a truly wonderful array of treasures. This enabled the archaeological teams, including many local people, to piece together the story of thousands of years of human activity within the valley.

If you stand in front of the stones and look over the top, you will be viewing the location of one of the original settlements. Each stone has the name of the historical era eg Roman, and the dates when those people are known to have lived at Stanwick Lakes. The stones also have three plaques depicting either excavated artefacts or people and animals of the time.



1 Neolithic 3700BC–3500BC

The excavations provided clear evidence of life at Stanwick Lakes in the centuries after 4000BC. The Neolithic (New Stone Age) people were the first farmers of this land and they also built a series of monumental mounds of earth and timber along the Nene valley. Within the long barrow burial mound that would have been in front of where you are standing now, flint arrow heads (pictured above) were found, which would have been used for hunting animals such as wild boar. Deer antler rakes and picks would have been used to excavate the barrow ditches.



2 Bronze Age 2000BC–1500BC

This stone is next to a Bronze Age round barrow burial mound. The barrows that were excavated on the site contained a skeleton of a man and his possessions such as decorated pots, flint daggers, jet buttons and bone tools. These artefacts provide a tantalising glimpse of how the Bronze Age settlers lived and of the complex rituals acted out at their burials. An auroch (pictured above right) is depicted, skulls of this huge prehistoric wild ox were included with bones of small domestic cattle heaped above a burial in one of the barrows.



3 Iron Age 400BC–43AD

By 400BC the Iron Age farming community was growing grain for bread making; tools such as the beehive quern shown on the marker stone were developed to turn the grain into flour. Trees were being felled to fuel the furnaces for making iron, the wood was also used to construct the 50 timber framed roundhouses that were excavated on the site. The Iron Age people were also the first to use coinage and those depicted on the stone are representations of those found here at Stanwick Lakes.

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4 Roman 250AD–410AD

Following the Roman invasion of the 1st century AD, farming continued on the site, with the roundhouses being replaced by timber and later stone buildings. The settlement at Stanwick now became a prosperous farm estate, supplying nearby Roman towns with foodstuffs. One of the most significant finds was the unearthing of a sizeable and luxurious Roman villa, with its vibrantly coloured mosaic floors (replica pictured far right). Other notable finds were the remains of a funerary monument, that included a carved image of a Roman river or sea god and a flagon depicting what is believed to be a Roman gladiator.



5 Saxon & Norman 950AD–1154AD

With the collapse of the Roman Empire the villa community came to an end. The remaining people, including the Anglo-Saxon settlers, now lived in scattered small farmsteads. By the 10th century, under the rule of the Saxon Kings, the farms were brought together to form the villages of Stanwick and Raunds; and agriculture changed to the open field system. In the river valley a Saxon thegn (lord) built his timber hall and a stream was harnessed to run a water-mill producing flour and providing additional income. Domestic finds from the excavation of the manor of West Cotton include a beautiful bone comb (pictured right) and a bone gaming piece.

6 Medieval 1154AD–1450AD

After the Norman Conquest the timber hall at West Cotton was rebuilt in stone. At the same time flooding caused the watermill to be abandoned and a flood bank was constructed to protect the hamlet. The manor was later abandoned, the barn and kitchen range were converted into houses and new stone ranges were also built. For the final century, before the hamlet was totally deserted, it was occupied by five families of peasant farmers.

During the excavation many artefacts were recovered that give us an insight into domestic life in medieval times; these include a bone flute and bronze and iron keys (as depicted on the marker stone).

They also found a wonderful carving of a praying knight (pictured below). This, along with other finds, can be seen in the Stanwick Lakes Visitor Centre.

