

## Discovering Lanton

In 2003 a program of fieldwalking was carried out across two areas of Tarmac's Lanton Quarry near Wooler in Northumberland. The fieldwalking produced a large number of Mesolithic and Neolithic stone tools. Since then, Archaeological Research Services Ltd have returned to the quarry to carry out test-pitting, sediment coring and excavation.

Lanton Quarry sits in the Milfield Basin on a sand and gravel terrace overlooking the River Till. This makes it a very fertile place with good drainage and a low risk of flooding. Also, shelter is provided by the nearby Cheviot Hills. These things would make the site attractive to settlers in the past.

The archaeology that has been excavated at the quarry dates from the Neolithic period through to the Anglo-Saxon period. This includes evidence showing that people have settled there at different times for over 5000 years. Neolithic, Bronze Age and Anglo-Saxon structures have provided vital information not only about how people lived but also how they worked. The amazing finds from the quarry include pottery, quern stones for grinding corn, glass beads and metal knives.

However archaeologists have uncovered evidence to suggest that this landscape was not only used by the living, but that it was also a place for the dead.



Schoolchildren excavating test pits in their search for Stone Age tools

## Learning at Lanton

Children aged between six and fourteen from seven different schools across Northumberland visited the quarry in order to help them learn more about the past in their local area. Through the project, funded by English Heritage and Tarmac, the children learned about the history of where they live and what it means to them. Each school had the opportunity to learn more about a working quarry and to get hands-on experience of what it is like to be an archaeologist. The children dug test pits, scraping the ground with trowels before sieving the soil very carefully to look for finds.

For more information, visit:

[www.archaeologicalresearchservices.com/lantonwebsite](http://www.archaeologicalresearchservices.com/lantonwebsite)

and



[www.maelmin.org.uk](http://www.maelmin.org.uk)



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# The Archaeology of Lanton Quarry, Northumberland



## Life and death in the Milfield Basin







Flint tools, including Neolithic arrowheads, were discovered during fieldwalking on the site in 2003.

3900 BC



2800 BC

This Late Neolithic Grooved Ware pot was discovered in a pit towards the north of the quarry. Forty pieces were found in total and had to be painstakingly reassembled.

The pot had been decorated with horizontal and cross-hatched grooves, and burned remains in the pot were radiocarbon dated confirming the date. This pot is the best preserved example of its kind ever found in Northumberland.

Enigmatic triangular-shaped buildings, like the one to the left, and Carinated Bowl pottery, above, date back to the Early Neolithic, nearly 6000 years ago. This was the time of the first farmers, when the wild forests were tamed and people started to shape the world around them by building great monuments.



During the Iron Age, from around 700BC onwards, the local people may well have viewed the Lanton area as having some special religious significance. Recent excavations have unearthed the ephemeral remains of a shrine, and next to it, the carefully buried remains of a lamb in a grave (right).

50 BC



During excavations two stone-built graves, called cists, were discovered towards the eastern edge of the quarry. One was empty, but the other contained human remains.

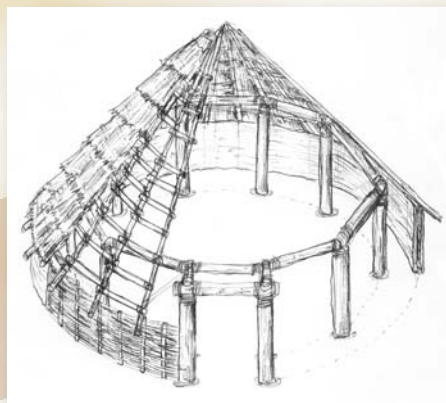
Parts of a skeleton, including the skull and some leg bones, were found within the small, stone-built box that had been dug into the ground. Although the skeleton was incomplete, the bones had been placed in the correct positions, with the head resting on a stone pillow. The bones belonged to a woman who would have been about 70 years of age when she died. She would have been alive around 50BC, during the later Iron Age.

The way in which she had been buried, the lack of wear on the bones and the fact that the lady lived to such an old age suggests that she may have been somebody very important, perhaps a druidess of the nearby shrine.

These multi-coloured glass beads were discovered in one of the workshops. Glass slag was also discovered which suggests that this bead, and others like it, were made on the site at Lanton Quarry.



AD 600



1500 BC

During the Bronze Age, around 1500 BC, around 700 years after the introduction of metalworking and the first metal tools, the people who lived in this part of Northumberland lived in large post-built roundhouses, like the one to the left. The Bronze Age people left their own distinct types of tools and pottery, many of which have been found at Lanton Quarry.



This rusty metal knife blade was found in another of the workshops along with some metal-working waste. Again this shows us that items were not just being used on the site but that they were being made as well. The knife blade was very rusty due to the length of time that it had been in the ground but once it had been x-rayed its shape was clearer.

A low-status 'pioneer' Anglo-Saxon village was discovered towards the southern end of the quarry. A total of 7 workshops were discovered, each one producing artefacts relating to the different industries that were practised within them. As well as these workshops, 4 post-built rectangular structures, such as the one to the left, were excavated. These structures are thought to have acted as living quarters for some residents of the village, although two had larger entrances suggesting that they may have been barns.

