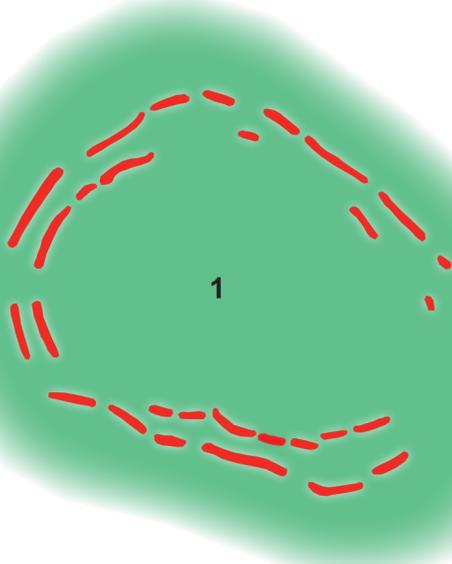


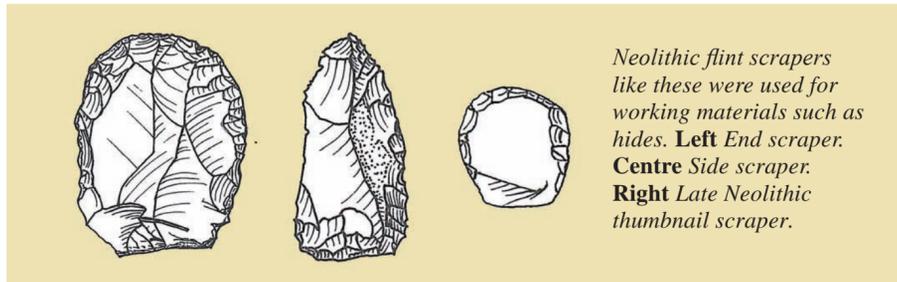
digging pits and ditches

Womaston causewayed enclosure

The Womaston causewayed enclosure is one of the earliest Neolithic sites in the Walton basin and occupies a low hillock which is one of the few prominent landmarks in the valley bottom. The enclosure is 180 metres by 130 metres across and covers an area of 1.8 hectares. It had two roughly concentric lines of interrupted ditches between about 5–14 metres apart, and has a possible entrance on the southern side where the inner ditch turns inwards. Excavations have shown that the ditch segments were about 2.5m wide and up to 2m deep, with steep sides and flat bottoms. Radiocarbon dates suggest that the enclosure was built during the period between about 3700–3300 BC. The discovery of charred cereal grains in the ditches suggests arable farming was taking place in close proximity. Similar Neolithic enclosures are known elsewhere in southern Britain and are thought to have been used for seasonal gatherings rather than as permanent settlement sites.



Below Excavation in progress on one of the ditch segments of the Womaston causewayed enclosure. Material dug from the ditches was used for building banks on the inside. The total length of the ditches was probably about 700 metres and would have involved the excavation of thousands of tonnes of gravel.



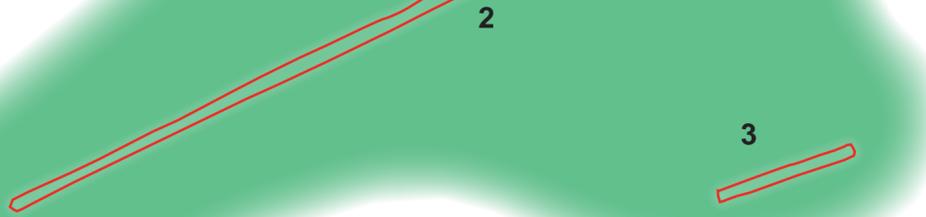
Neolithic flint scrapers like these were used for working materials such as hides. **Left** End scraper. **Centre** Side scraper. **Right** Late Neolithic thumbnail scraper.

Hindwell and Walton Green cursuses

Similar examples to these two elongated ditched enclosures are known throughout Britain. They are thought to have had a ceremonial function, perhaps as processional ways. The shorter Walton Green cursus has yet to be closely dated, but radiocarbon dates suggests that the Hindwell cursus, which is one of the longest known in Britain, belongs to the period between about 3900–3500 BC. The landscape setting of the two sites is quite different. The Walton Green cursus lies parallel to the valley side and seems to be aligned on the eastern entrance to the valley. The Hindwell cursus acts more like a barrier, dividing the valley into two. But is it significant that both appear to be roughly aligned on the direction of sunrise on Beltane (1 May)? Earth dug from the ditches was probably used to make banks on the inner side.



Left The ditch of the Hindwell cursus **2**. The cursus is 4.6 kilometres long with side ditches up to 74 metres apart, roughly squared at each end, and enclosing an area of about 27 hectares. The steep-sided ditches were up to about 4 metres wide and 2 metres deep with an entrance gap at one end at least. Building the monuments involved the digging by hand of tens of thousands of tonnes of gravel.

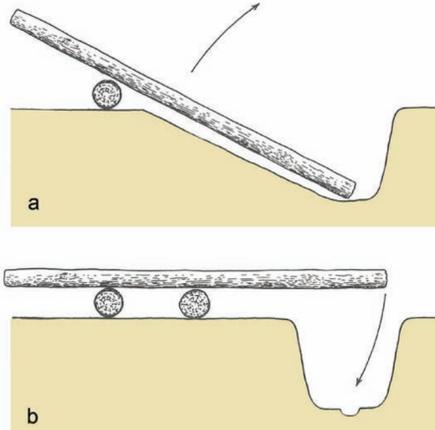


Left How the Walton Green cursus **3** may have appeared. The cursus is 673 metres long with roughly squared ends and enclosed an area of 3.6 hectares. The ditches are up to 58 metres apart and were up to 3 metres wide and 0.8 metres deep and there is evidence of an entrance gap at one end at least. Digging the ditches would have involved the excavation of thousands of tonnes of gravel.

putting up palisades

Walton and Hindwell enclosures

These three palisaded enclosures lie close together on the eastern side of the basin. They were each made of large upright timbers but had been built in slightly different ways. The Walton enclosure **4** had more widely-spaced posts set in separate pits with post ramps (see **a** to right). The Hindwell enclosure **5** was built of less widely-spaced posts set in intercutting pits, again with post-ramps. The Hindwell double-palisaded enclosure **6** was built of close-set posts set in continuous, steep-sided foundation trenches (**b**). Traces of the original posts are clearly visible in the ground where they have rotted away or been burnt. Charcoal from burnt posts indicates that the posts were of oak, possibly felled on the valley sides. For the sake of stability posts normally have to be set up to a third of their depth in the ground, which suggests that each of the palisades stood to 4 metres or more above ground level. Radiocarbon dates suggest that the three enclosures were built in the period between about 2800–2400 BC, possibly one after the other. A single entrance is known in the case of the Hindwell enclosure.



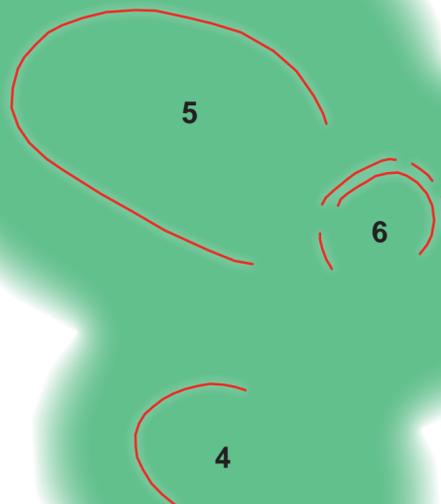
Below The Walton palisaded enclosure **4** was at least 200 metres by 280 metres across and enclosed an area of more than 5 hectares. It was built of posts up to 0.7 metres in diameter, of which at least 200 would have been needed if its plan was symmetrical. Individual post-pits like the one shown here were up to 2 metres across and 2 metres deep, with ramps up to 4 metres long to help in raising the posts.



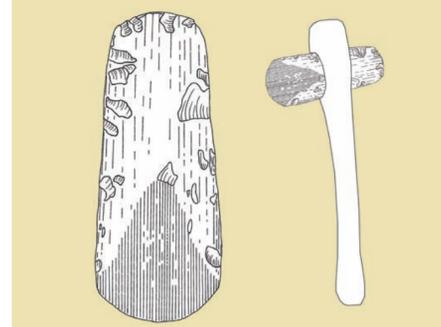
Left The Hindwell palisaded enclosure **5** was 750 metres long and up to 540 metres wide and covered an area of at least 34 hectares. The palisade is over 1800 metres long, with posts about 0.8 metres in diameter spaced about 1.6 metres centre to centre. It would have needed at least 1100 posts in addition to the digging of the intercutting foundation slots. These were up to 2 metres deep and 2 metres across, with post ramps up to 6 metres long.



Above The two palisades of the Hindwell double-palisaded enclosure **6** are about 25–30 metres apart. It measures 340 metres by 280 metres across and covers an area of about 6.9 hectares. The palisade trenches, originally perhaps 1850 metres in length, had held close-set posts up to 0.35–0.4m across. Construction would have required about 4500 posts in addition to the digging the more or less continuous foundation trenches, which were about 2.8 metres wide and 1.8 metres deep.



Polished flint or stone axes were used for tree-felling and woodworking.



Right Impression of how the Walton palisaded enclosure may once have appeared. Like the other enclosures it is uncertain whether the posts were freestanding or made up a barrier.

