



Wolvercote Commoners'

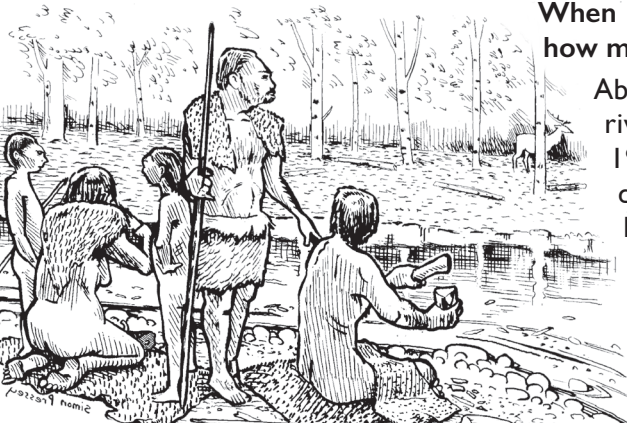
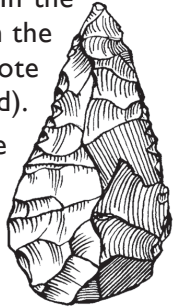
NEWSLETTER February 2018

History on our Doorstep

When we walk out and enjoy Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common, how many of us know its long and varied history?

About 200,000 years ago an ancient stream flowed west to join the river Thames on what we now know as Port Meadow. In the 19th century a number of flint tools were discovered in the dried up stream bed and these are known as the Wolvercote Hand Axes (now held in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford).

The Wolvercote Axes were a distinctive style in the development of flint as a material used as cutting instruments, and were used for over 100,000 years before the first metal instruments. (The axe shown with its typical 'slipper' shape is nearly 20cms long.)

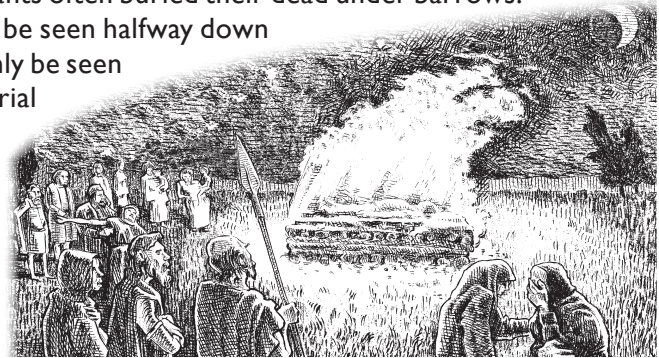
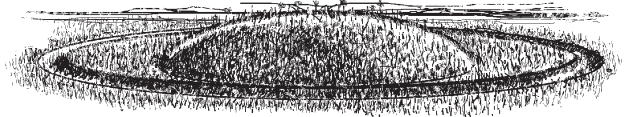


During the Bronze Age, which lasted from 2200 to 800BC, the inhabitants often buried their dead under barrows. There were at least 8 of them built on Port Meadow and one can still be seen halfway down the eastern side. The others have all eroded away over time and can only be seen

using modern aerial archaeological techniques.

Barrows

were built in many different ways. They were used for burials and cremations or sometimes for both. They were used over long periods and were also thought to mark the boundaries between tribal lands.



During the Iron Age (700BC to the Roman invasion AD43) Port Meadow was part of the territory of the Dubonni tribe. The farmers made a series of temporary dwellings and ditches in the area which were revealed by aerial photography in the 1930s. Today we can still see the shapes of the round houses and enclosure ditches in the northern half of the Meadow. Their dwellings were wattle and daub constructions, with a limited life due to the Meadow being a flood plain. During the summer, when they grazed their livestock, as many as 20 houses existed altogether which may have represented a single family group.

(All images © Simon Pressey)

Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common have been preserved relatively untouched over the millennia and are now a classified SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). It is still an active flood plain and floods partly or completely, as it has over the years and as it should carry on doing for years to come. Although it doesn't flood as much as in the past, it still remains an important factor in flood management, especially considering the amount of building on other areas previously classified as flood plain. The collective right to graze animals free of charge is recorded in the Domesday Book and has been exercised ever since. Some of those living in the Wolvercote Parish still retain their grazing rights*, for either cows, horses, donkeys, geese or even chickens! We are privileged to have the Meadow and Common on our doorstep and, together with the Freeman of Oxford, the Wolvercote Commoners act as custodians of the area and work hard to maintain it for generations to come.

*To see if you still have grazing rights go to: www.wolvercotecommoners.co.uk/?page_id=143

Don't forget Village Work Mornings second Saturday of every month

Meet outside the Village Hall at 10am (bring gloves, wellies and any gardening tools you have). Children welcome

www.wolvercotecommoners.co.uk - wolvercote.commoners@yahoo.co.uk

Chair: Angie Goff (07903866656) Secretary: Mary Brown (01865 236897)