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The entire area of the reserve was important to our prehistoric ancestors. They considered wetlands to be special places; both for their plentiful resources and in a spiritual way. They buried their dead in burial mounds across the site overlooking the River Trent and Polser Brook. They offered up bronze weapons to the rivers in much the same way as we offer up coins into wishing wells today. As a result many bronze spears, swords and axes have been found in this area. These weapons were found in the immediate vicinity of the reserve and are now in Brehouse Yard Museum.

## Collared urn and cremation, bronze spears, axes and swords

*Bronze Age Ceremony*

## Jewellery

*Anglo-Saxon*

The Anglo Saxons buried their dead here in the 6th century. People were buried in fine clothing with goods that spoke of their status or occupation in life. Gravel quarrying here in the 19th century revealed a number of such burials; some furnished with weapons and shields, others with fine jewellery. These brooches, now in the British Museum, were worn in pairs by women. Between each pair of brooches the excavators found strings of beads made from glass and amber.

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# archaeology

**artefacts** found  
Skylarks Nature Reserve

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## Flint tools

*Prehistoric life*

Wetlands and rivers were important to our prehistoric ancestors. They were fertile grounds for hunting, fishing and gathering food, for building materials and medicines. Their temporary camps left little trace but their tools survive. Flint was worked into an impressive range of tools; from arrow heads to daggers, from hide scrapers to drill-bits. These flints were found along the Polser Brook and are now in Brehouse Yard Museum.

# archaeology

## historical periods

### Skylarks Nature Reserve



## Iron Age settlement

2500 years ago you would have been looking out over an Iron Age settlement. You would see a cluster of roundhouses, smoke rising gently through their thatched rooves, nestled among a landscape of ancient burial mounds. The people living here farmed the landscape, fished in the river, made pots from the clay.

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## Bronze Age burial mounds



Before the quarry the land in this area rose gently away from the river plain. Burial mounds from the Bronze Age studded the slope ahead of you. These mounds were reused by Anglo-Saxon settlers who buried their leaders in these ancient monuments. They built their homes nearby to take advantage of the plentiful resources of the wetland. The replica grubenhauser on the reserve take their inspiration from one that was excavated here.

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## The Medieval road

This footpath is a remnant of the Medieval road that ran from Adbolton to Holme, and it may follow a very ancient routeway. Until recently it was a rough-surfaced road which became impassable in poor weather. Travelling along here 1000 years ago you would pass through a landscape of patchwork fields, with the village of Holme a short distance ahead, and ancient burial mounds in the fields to your right. Imagine how many people have walked this road over the years; you are quite literally following the footsteps of our ancestors....



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# archaeology

## ancient building techniques

### Skylarks Nature Reserve

People with money and power could bring in building materials from other places, but most people would build their homes from the materials available in their local environment. This meant respecting that environment and living in harmony with it. Houses in this area were built of timber rather than stone. Roofs were made of thatch or wooden shingles, and more recently of tiles made of the abundant local clay.

Walls were made of wattle and daub. Willow and hazel rods are woven together to make the wall. This is then covered in a layer of daub (mud mixed with horse hair and clay) to make the building weather-tight. Inside the floors would be of beaten earth or timber. These methods of building are very effective. Houses have been built like this since prehistory and the methods are still being used today.

The Skylarks site has a number of reconstructions built by a team of volunteers. The burial mound is a replica of one that was excavated only a stone's throw away. These date to the Bronze Age but were reused by Anglo Saxon settlers in the area. The small house is a replica of a 'grubenhau'; a workshop building often used as a weaving shed. This dates to the Anglo-Saxon period and the remains of one were discovered nearby.