

A History of Bicester through Archaeological Objects

Through archaeology discoveries are made of the objects people made and used in their lives in the past. These objects can be used, with other evidence, to give a comprehensive picture of the lives and beliefs of our ancestors, with insight into their beliefs and their technologies.

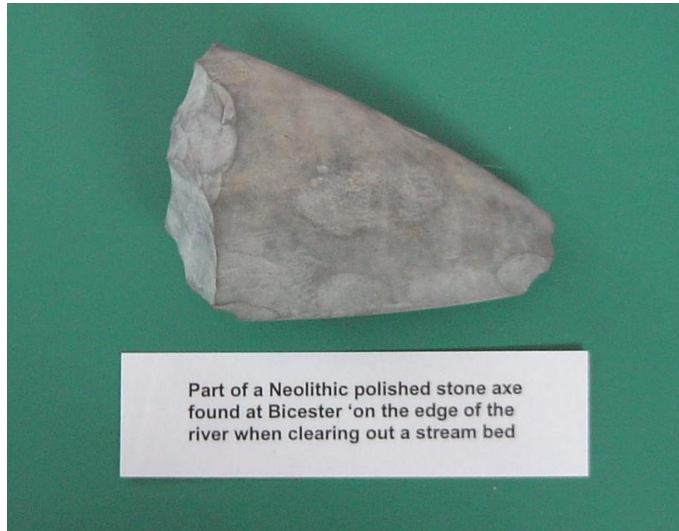
Since organic materials, in general do not 'last', this means that the objects available tend to be made of materials such as flint and pottery and metal. But we can make informed decisions that other materials, such as wood and fabrics would have been part of the picture. Sadly, we can never know the songs, stories and personal histories of these people.



Sometimes there is a stroke of luck in finding someone like the 'Ice Man' who can tell us so much more about clothing and weapons. We also rely on some of the Experimental Archaeology projects which often show us not only how much we do not understand, but also how skilled and intelligent our forefathers were. New methods of dating and DNA are doubtless going to tell us much more in the future.

Looking at 12 of the available objects from the Bicester area, we shall talk about how they were made and used and what they tell us about the skills, talents and lifestyle the people who owned them had. They can also tell us how the tribes of the world interacted, traded and communicated even thousands of years ago.

From the Mesolithic period onwards the Bicester area would have become more settled, initially hunting and transit camps, but as people began to stay longer and to grow crops and keep animals, they could begin to use the materials available to them to create the first real homes and have objects to keep within them that did not need to be portable and lightweight. People had left the refuges from the ice some time before and were moving across what is now Europe without having to move back south in the winter.



Many changes became possible once settlement took place, pottery was able to be produced for instance, and dogs, who had been companions and possible hunting supporters, could become guard dogs and organise livestock without bringing them down for a kill.

People became more acquisitive, objects could be used to impress or trade. Inevitably this desire to own and possess soon began to show in the desire to own land for both descendants and also ancestors, through burial rites and celebrations. Religious and tribal beliefs could thrive and develop. (A priestly class may have developed through the 'magical' production of metal)



By the Bronze Age wealth began to be symbolic and representative – a cache of palisade axes was probably a bank account of sorts. Sadly, the bank collapsed when iron became available.



Iron made it possible for weapons to be more ‘efficient’ than copper and bronze, and the young warlords of the age were, it is suggested, competing and fighting with other tribal chiefs as the land became more and more violent and settlements became heavily protected and fortified. Trade and coinage had developed also though, and some beautiful objects to feed the new cult of water offerings.

But the technologies and trade had led a super power to covet what was ripe for the taking, believing Britain to be full of gold, and knowing it to be rich in iron, tin and superbly trained hunting dogs and slaves, the Roman State watched and waited.....