

# SITE NOTEBOOK

## Didcot Archaeology Trail

**YAC member Jamie Waggott, aged 6, became interested in archaeology when he heard about an archaeological dig near his home in Didcot, Oxfordshire. His mum, Karen, told YAC more about what was discovered, and how this led to a campaign to try and protect the sites...**

A rare 'treasure' find of 126 Roman gold coins was found near Didcot in 1995 by a metal detectorist. So, when builders came to build 3,300 homes on cornfields at the edge of the town, they knew to look out for archaeology. The main dig ended at the beginning of last year. It found archaeology from every era from the end of the last Ice Age to Roman times. The table shows what was found and how it fits into the different eras of prehistory (the time before history was written down and recorded).

### Save Our Sites!

Jamie, and other people in Didcot, thought that more people should know about the archaeology and that other children could learn about history from what had been found.

A petition was started asking for the sites to be protected.

They suggested that a '9,000 Years of History Trail' should be created amongst the new houses.

The petition now has 1,160 signatures, see [www.petitionbuzz.com/petitions/ddmile](http://www.petitionbuzz.com/petitions/ddmile)



An article from the local newspaper, the *Didcot Herald*, about the campaign by Jamie and his mum © Newsquest

Archaeological period	Some of the Didcot dig finds
10,000BC to 4000BC (BC = before Christ) <b>Mesolithic/Middle Stone Age:</b> Hunter-gatherers come back to Britain after the Ice Age. Britain becomes an island. UK sites: Aveline's Hole, Howick, Star Carr.	12,000 year ago 1000+ flint implements and camp dating from around 7000BC (9000 years old)
4000BC to 3200BC <b>Early Neolithic/New Stone Age:</b> Farming begins. People live in tribes moving from place to place. Tombs, enclosures, flint and stone mining and pottery begin. UK sites: Cissbury, Windmill Hill and West Kennet.	6,000 years ago A complete 4000BC ceramic bowl, that had not been moved for 6000 years.
3200BC to 2300BC <b>Late Neolithic/New Stone Age:</b> People build henges and stone circles, religious beliefs involve the sun. UK sites: Grimes Graves, Skara Brae, Stonehenge.	5,200 years ago 4400 year old late Neolithic/early Bronze Age pond barrow. Less than 100 have been found in Britain.
2300BC to 700BC <b>Bronze Age:</b> Bronze tools, people begin farming the uplands, henges, stone circles and rich burials. UK sites: Bush Barrow, Calanais and Catholme.	4,300 years ago At the pond barrow: Charred bones and high quality flintwork, including crafted arrowheads; a settlement, unusual as they are not normally built by barrows.
700BC to AD43 <b>Iron Age:</b> Time of the Britons, a Celtic tribe. Iron tools, hill forts, rich burials, coins and the growth of kingdoms. The population grew. UK sites: Danebury, Maiden Castle, Hengistbury Head and Snettisham.	2,700 years ago 50-60 roundhouses, animal enclosures, 900 pits used to store corn. Field boundaries and trackway. Pit burials, thought to be linked to belief systems, including cattle and lamb skulls and human remains.
AD43 to AD450 <b>Roman or Romano-British:</b> Roman conquest, the buildings of forts, towns, villas, roads, baths and temples, arrival of Christianity and stone buildings. UK sites: Bath, Hadrian's Wall, Vindolanda, Chester, and St Alban's.	1,970 years ago The Didcot hoard of 126 gold coins. Roman aisled building with a bathhouse and hypocaust heating. Very deep wells. 4 or 5 corn driers used to dry the harvest for bread or ale brewing (safer than water to drink in Roman times). Possible market place. Ceremonial human burials. Bustum cremation where the remains stay in the place they are burned, these are unusual in a rural location.
	1,563 years ago

*Archaeologists are now studying the finds to confirm the above and reveal new details. A report should be ready in 2015.*

The campaign still has a long way to go, but lots of people now know about the town's long history. The house builders, who had already said they were not going to build on the Roman villa, have agreed to more information boards. The aim now is to get more of the sites where archaeology was found saved, and to make a proper

### Cool Coins!

Jamie saw the gold coin hoard at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The coins look like new, even though they had been buried for nearly 2,000 years. The British Museum owns the coins.

They say they could have been a gift from Marcus Aurelius when he became Roman emperor in

AD 160 and that they were probably buried for safe keeping.

The Roman coin hoard found at Didcot.  
© Trustees of the British Museum



path that links them together so people can take a walk through history.

There are other ideas too, such as building a replica Iron Age roundhouse and putting up information boards about the Great Western Railway and the power station (which will be knocked down this year), both of which are part of Didcot's more recent history.

Wittenham Clumps (an Iron Age fort), Didcot Railway Centre and Harwell Diamond Light Source Scientific Centre are all nearby, so one day the Trail could tell the story of how humans developed technology from simple Mesolithic flints to steam trains, particle accelerators and nuclear power in 9,000 years!

**Karen and Jamie Waggott**