Fire at Must Farm!

Discovery and Evaluation

The site was first discovered in 1999 when a local archaeologist noticed a series of wooden posts sticking out of the quarry’s edge. This initial discovery led to a small evaluation in 2004, before a larger one followed in 2006. This excavation not only revealed incredibly well preserved artefacts but gave us a real glimpse into life during the Bronze Age.

The 2006 evaluation only scratched the surface of the site but it provided some truly extraordinary discoveries. The settlement consisted of houses built on a series of piles, or stilts, sunk into a river channel below and seems to have been built between 1000 – 800BC. Around the edge of the settlement a palisade, consisting of large ash posts, was constructed in situ, leaving the debris at the bottom of the slow-moving river. As the site is situated on the edge of a brick pit, some of the settlement has been historically quarried away at some time in the last century, leaving approximately half.

At some point, perhaps as little as six months, after the settlement was built a fire tore through it, causing the homes to collapse and drop into the river below where the flames were immediately quenched. As the material lay on the riverbed it was covered with layers of non-porous silt which helped to preserve everything from wooden utensils to textiles. It is this degree of preservation which makes the site fascinating and gives us an unprecedented insight into life during the Bronze Age.

I would like children to imagine they are part of a Bronze Age family, living in one of the huts at Must Farm. It seems like life was very settled, and these villagers lived and worked alongside each other happily. One day (we don’t know when), something catches fire and this spreads rapidly (imagine all the wood in and around the houses). Within minutes, the whole village is on fire!

Evidence tells us nobody died, as no human bones were found in the houses. But what was the story behind The Fire of Must Farm?

Who caused it and how did it happen?

Was there time for people to collect their belongings?

Who escaped, and what were their jobs or roles in the village?

Where did they go?

**The more you research about Must Farm, the more history you will know. But you may also use your imagination, to make your ideas come to life!**