

## EVIDENCE FOR AN IRON AGE ROUNDHOUSE AT SOMERTON

*It can be assumed there were Iron Age roundhouses within Island settlements but until now there has been no archaeology to identify one with certainty. The Somerton discovery may turn out to be of considerable importance.*

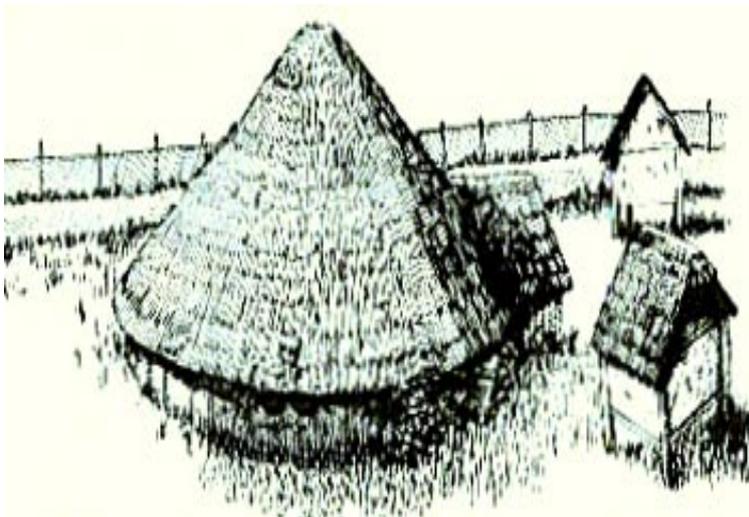
The excavations arose out of a planning application for development on land adjacent to the BAE Systems plant. There had been no previous evidence of prehistoric activity on the site but Roman and prehistoric finds in the surrounding area were enough to justify some preliminary archaeology across grassland within the proposed development area.

The archaeology consisted of fifteen trenches of 40x2 metres covering around 3% of the site. The most significant discoveries came at the southern end of the site. Here there were sufficient pottery finds to confirm Iron Age occupation. One trench uncovered the edge of a curvilinear feature which was interpreted as a drip gully running under the eaves of a roundhouse. A post hole within the feature provided additional evidence. A short distance away another trench revealed post holes which might indicate the type of four-post granary often associated with Iron Age roundhouses.

The only other possible roundhouses on the Island have been tentative indications at the Brading Roman Villa site and on the Yaverland 'Time Team' dig, neither of which have been confirmed. The Somerton site would appear to offer the possibility of uncovering the layout of at least part of an Iron Age farm settlement, which would be a first for the Island. The planning recommendations are unknown as yet, but it seems likely comprehensive archaeology will be proposed before development can begin.

A geophysical survey of the Medina environs suggested many possible archaeological features to the east of Somerton Farm. An Iron Age settlement to the west adds further intrigue to a district that is commanding increasing archaeological interest.

### Impression of an Iron Age roundhouse with accompanying granaries.



Although their finished appearance can only be speculation. They were constructed using timber wall posts and roof rafters. It is thought the walls were completed with wattle and daub and the roof was probably thatched. Smoke from a central hearth may have seeped out through the thatch or from a hole at the apex.