



# Dibble's Farm, Christon

You could say that Dibble's Farm was the home of Rusty the Dog.

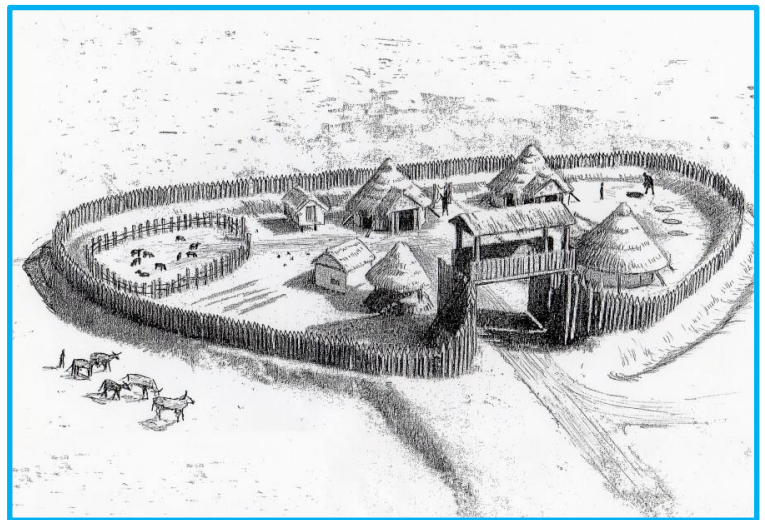
In January 1970, work was taking place on building the M5 motorway when some pits were revealed by one of the diggers. With the agreement of the constructors, a team of archaeologists were watching the progress of the work. They were able to step in and investigate the pits before the earth-movers destroyed all the evidence. For several weeks, they worked in semi-arctic conditions to explore the site. What they found was the remains of an Iron Age farm.



*A skeleton being uncovered © Weston Mercury*

The site is known as Dibble's Farm after the name of the owner at the time of the excavation. Turn south on the motorway at Junction 21 and count the bridges as you go under them. Just past the fourth bridge is the point where Dibble's farm used to be.

Except that here you are now passing through a cutting and the original ground would have been above your head, more or less at the level of the bridge.



*How an Iron Age farm may have looked © Llanelli Community Heritage/John Wynne Hopkins*

Unfortunately nearly all the records of the excavation have been lost, but the finds themselves have all been kept and many of them are on display at Weston Museum.

The excavation was written up some years after the event by pottery expert Dr Elaine Morris, who reconstructed events with the help of the finds, some photos and interviews with some of the people involved.

What they discovered were some 65 pits filled with domestic and industrial refuse.

Some of the pits were as much as 1.5 metres deep. They also found a number of post-holes which suggested the presence of buildings and fences.

So what was found in the pits? Many contained artefacts (things made by humans), including 1,905 pieces of Iron Age pottery, most of which came from objects made from local clay. There were also personal items made of bronze and iron including a brooch, a spiral armlet and several blades. There were objects made from worked bone, such as needles and pins and a pendant made from a boar's tusk. Items made of stone included whetstones (for sharpening blades), grinders and slingshots.



*The excavation underway © Weston Mercury*

The pits were also used for disposing of human bodies and altogether the skeletons of 21 individuals were found in them.

Buried at the feet of one of the humans were two dogs. They stood about 50 cm high, which is roughly the height of a modern collie. The bones from these two dogs have been combined to produce the skeleton in the display at the museum. It has been adopted as the museum's mascot and is known as Rusty, the Iron-Age dog!

Were the dogs used for hunting or herding animals or were they just pets?

The archaeologists also found bones of cattle, sheep, pigs, horses and deer but these were not whole animals and were probably the remains of food.

Another interesting find was evidence for metal-working in the form of a special clay container known as a crucible for heating bronze. Some of the waste from the process was found with it.

Only part of the site was excavated because of the need to press on with the motorway construction. In prehistoric times it was probably a small farmstead occupied by a single family. The people who lived there would have mostly depended on what they could grow and produce themselves.

From the style and type of the objects found, archaeologists believe that this farm was active in the early to middle Iron Age. That is to say around 300 BC.



*Rusty the dog as our children's club mascot © Weston Museum*



Weston-super-Mare  
Town Council