

Archaeology in Peacehaven

Residents and schools in Peacehaven also excavated test pits in their gardens and as well as uncovering the archaeological stories of their gardens we were able to explore some of the archaeology previously uncovered in the area.

Archaeological discoveries in Peacehaven reveal a landscape that was home to farmers, craftworkers, and communities for over 5,000 years. From Neolithic pits to Iron Age houses, the evidence shows how people shaped the land, marked it with monuments, and left behind traces of daily life.

Living on the Land

Prehistoric people chose the uplands and valleys around Peacehaven for settlement and farming.

- Neolithic (c. 5500 years ago): People dug large pits to deposit pottery, flint, and burnt material—possibly linked to seasonal gatherings and ceremonies.
- Bronze Age (c. 3000 years ago): Roundhouses with storage pits were built, some later re-used for cremation burials.
- Iron Age (c. 2500 years ago): Rectangular “byre houses” sheltered both people and animals. The settlement had areas for farming, craftworking, and storage.



Early Neolithic serrated flint flake used for processing nettles into cord and rope

A Landscape of Memory

Peacehaven’s early pits became part of a monumental landscape.

- Barrows (burial mounds) were aligned with the earlier Neolithic pits, perhaps marking pathways for ceremonies.
- A 500m-long trackway linked uplands to grazing land, with offerings of cattle bones and antler tools marking its creation.

This Early Bronze Age Antler Pick appears to have been deliberately placed in a rectangular pit alongside a trackway to mark the creation of the (at least) 500m long route used to move people and animals to grazing areas in the lowlands to the uplands.



Farming, Crafting, and Trade

The people of Peacehaven were skilled farmers and makers.

- They grew wheat, barley, peas, and beans, and probably kept sheep.
- Pottery was made locally, with workshops producing vessels tempered with fire-cracked flint.
- Textiles were woven using spindle whorls and loom weights.
- Evidence of salt production shows trade connections with the coast.



When this spindle whorl was made in the Late Bronze Age, the person making it created the decoration around the edges by pressing their fingernails into the wet clay. The spindle whorl was used as a weight to spin wool into thread – the weight would ensure the spindle kept spinning. It was found in a rubbish pit alongside lots of pottery sherds (25% of these were pottery wasters – pots that had been misfired or otherwise damaged during production). A late Bronze Age building in a D shape was uncovered nearby and it's possible that it was used for pottery production.

Connections Across Time

Cremation burials in both the Bronze Age and Roman periods may have marked moments of closure when settlements were abandoned. Finds such as decorated spindle whorls, flint axeheads, and even a broken mace-head remind us that this was a lived-in, worked, and remembered landscape—a place where generations returned to farm, to craft, and to honour their dead.

This Late Neolithic mace head was made from a beach pebble, shaping the mace-head around the naturally occurring hole. The haft (handle) would have fit through this hole and was probably positioned towards the butt of the mace-head. After shaping and before hafting, this mace-head was burnt at a low temperature, probably for a long time, to create the deep red surface on the grey flint tool.

