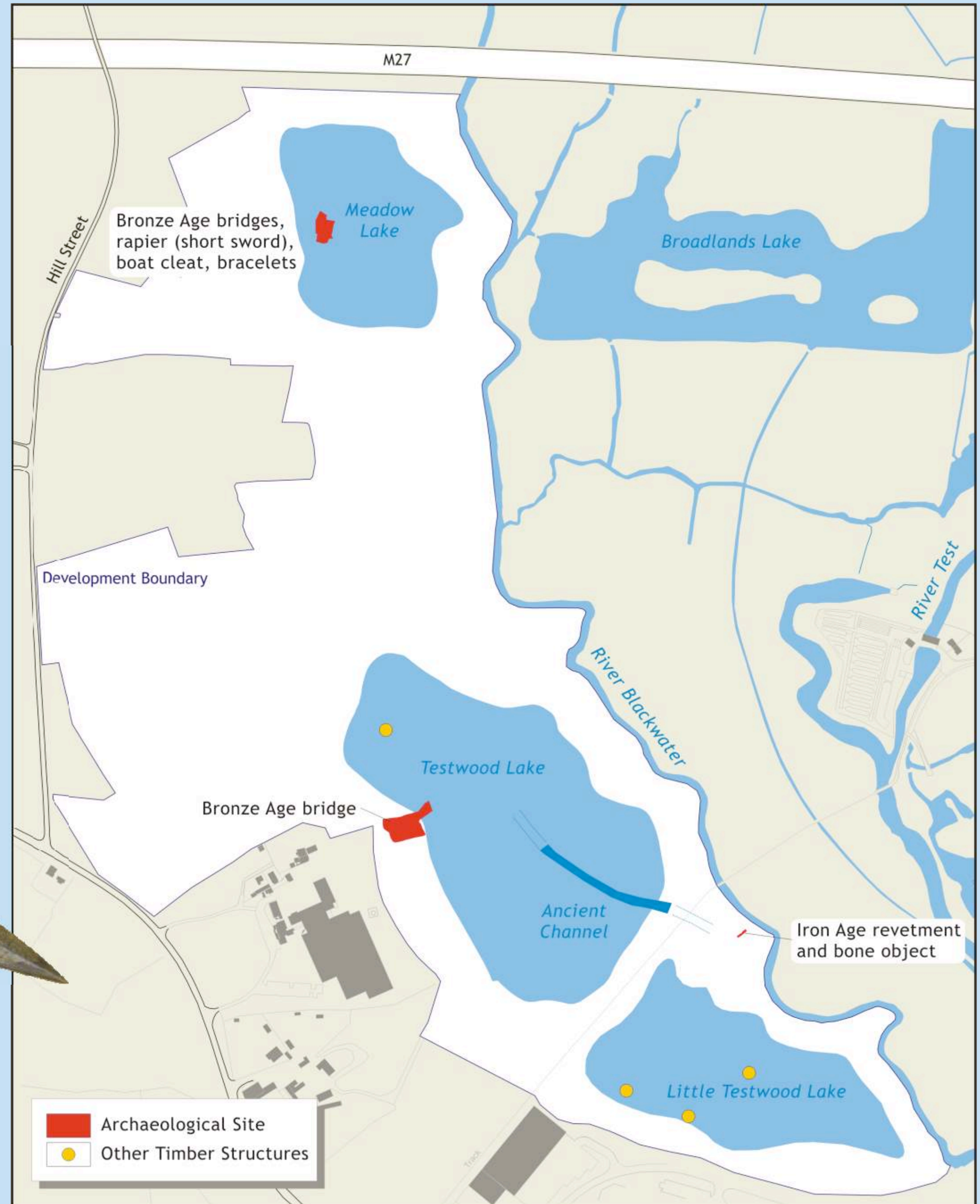


# Testwood Reservoir

In 1996 Southern Water began work on a reservoir at Testwood to store water to supply 200,000 people in and around Southampton. As with all major construction schemes, archaeologists were called in to see if there were any important remains from the past. While carrying out this work, staff from Wessex Archaeology came across fascinating evidence of early society, including part of the earliest bridge ever definitely identified in England, dating to the Middle Bronze Age, c.1500BC.



*Bronze Age rapier, Romano-British copper bracelet and a half finished shale bracelet*



*Meadow Lake site Bronze Age bridge: spraying timbers to stop them degrading*



*Bone object found near the Iron Age revetment*

*Little Testwood Lake site Iron Age revetment: to stabilise the river bank*

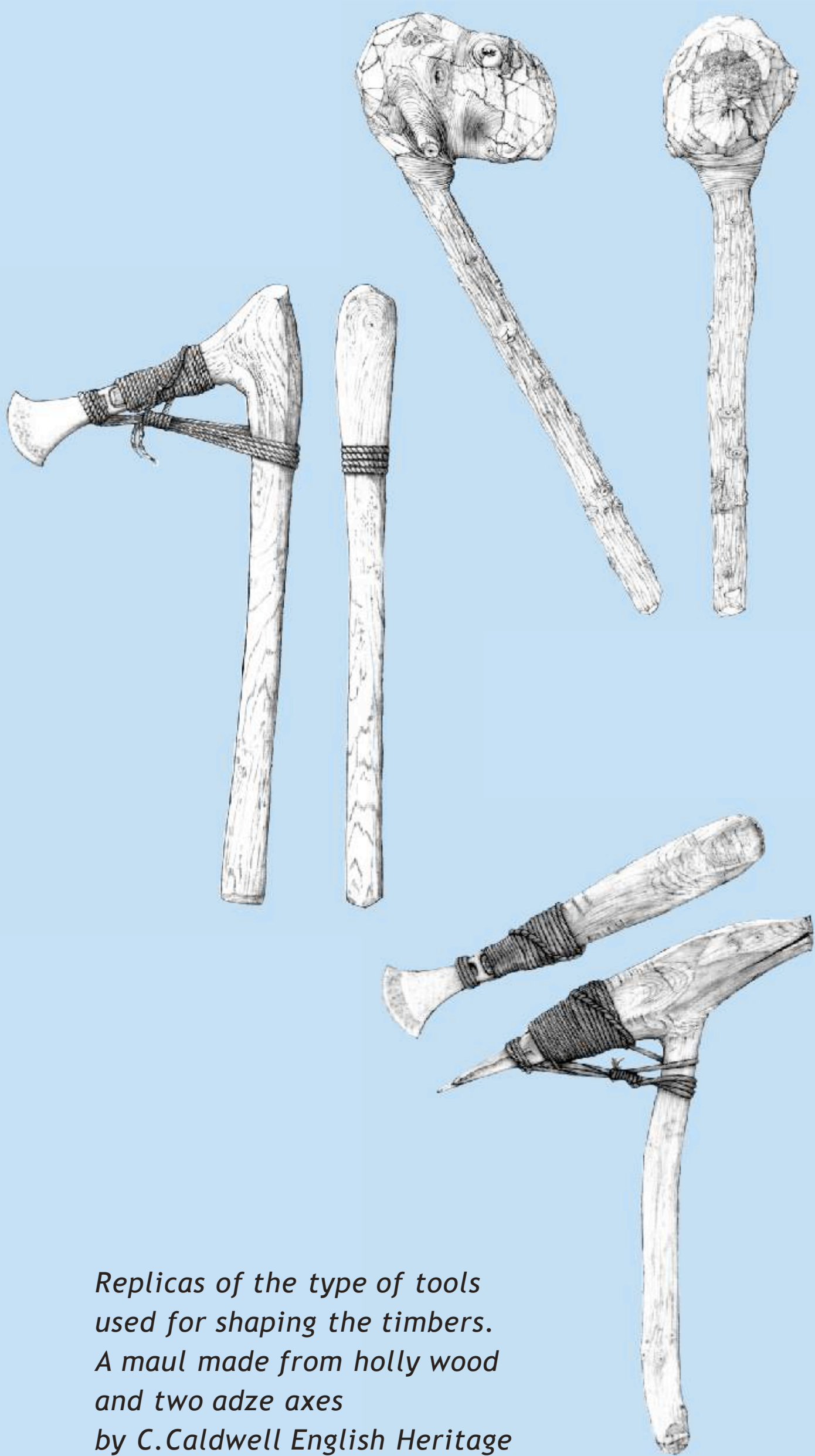


# Three Bridges

## *The Bridges*

This area is in the floodplain of the River Blackwater, and was once threaded with streams that have since changed course. Crossing the wet landscape were at least three bridges.

The bridges were made from upright posts driven into the riverbed, supporting a walkway of horizontal planks. The Testwood Lake bridge was about 26m long. Archaeologists found 143 stakes, some as much as 3.5 m (13 ft) high.



*Replicas of the type of tools used for shaping the timbers. A maul made from holly wood and two adze axes by C.Caldwell English Heritage*



*Reconstruction of one of the bridges based on environmental evidence, by T.Goskar*



*Bronze Age timbers wrapped in plastic to stop them drying out and cracking*

The timbers survived for thousands of years because the high water table kept them damp. Some timbers were so well preserved that the marks left by the tools of the prehistoric carpenters could still be seen.



# Boat & Short Sword

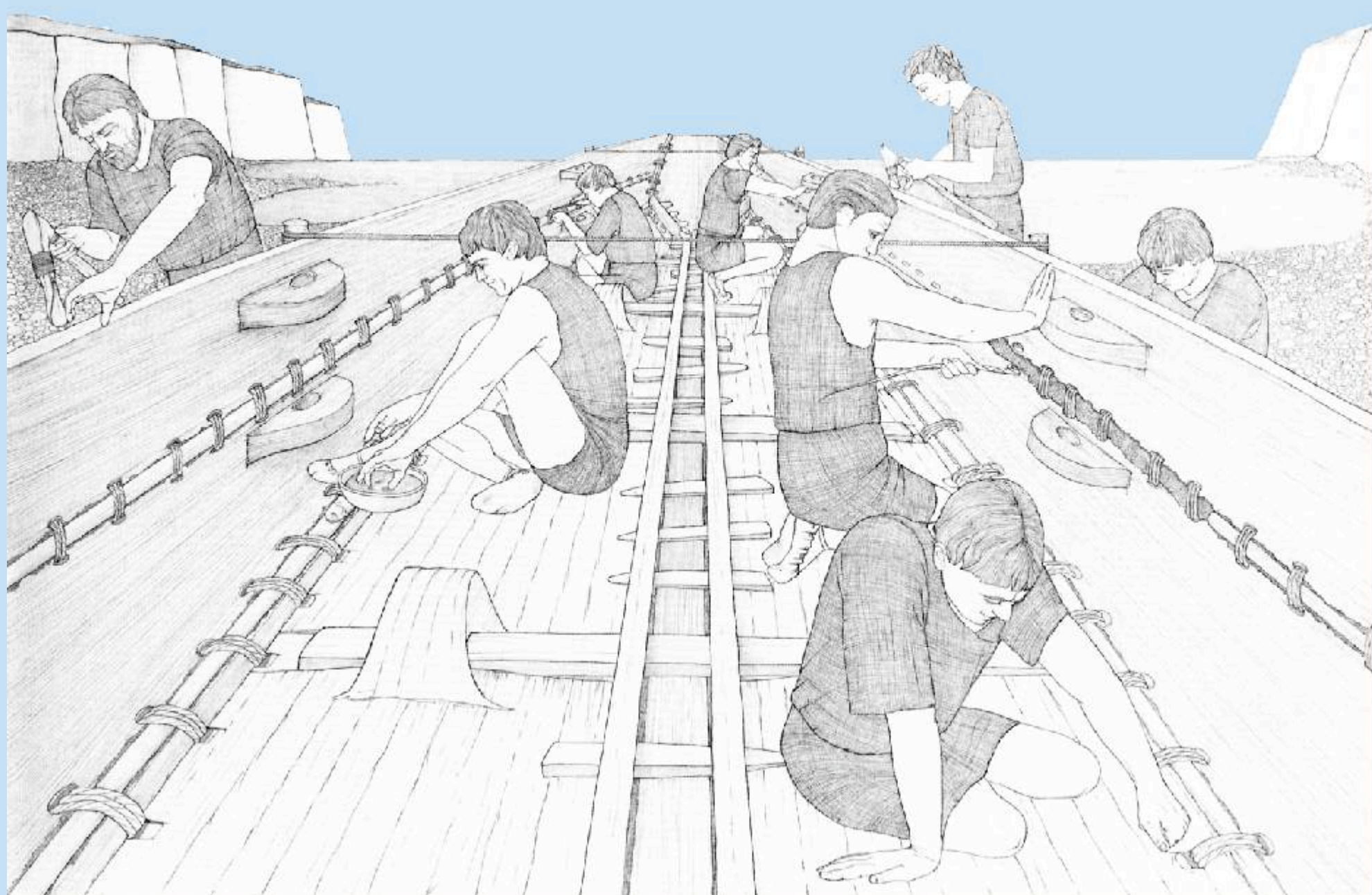
## *The Boat*

During the excavation at Meadow Lake a curved piece of oak, 37cm long, was found. It was a small fragment of a boat dating back to the Middle Bronze Age (c.1500BC). The wood is all that remains of a cleat, used to fasten the crossbeams bracing the planks which formed the hull of the boat.

Sea-going boats of a similar construction have been found at Dover and Ferriby. This is one of the oldest pieces of a sea-going boat ever to be found in Britain, and shows that people were travelling great distances to and from Testwood in the Bronze Age.



*Bronze Age boat cleat  
found on the Meadow Lake site*



*These were flat-bottomed boats, about 11m-16m long, powered by up to 18 paddles.  
Illustration by C.Caldwell by kind permission of English Heritage*



*Reconstruction of Bronze Age boats,  
by kind permission of the Dover Boat Museum*



*The Bronze Age rapier or  
short sword would originally  
have been set in a wooden hilt*

## *The Bronze Rapier*

Buried in the mud below the bridges at Meadow Lake, archaeologists found the blade from a short, light, thrusting sword called a rapier. It is possible that the sword was dropped into the water by accident, but more likely that it was placed there as part of a ritual.



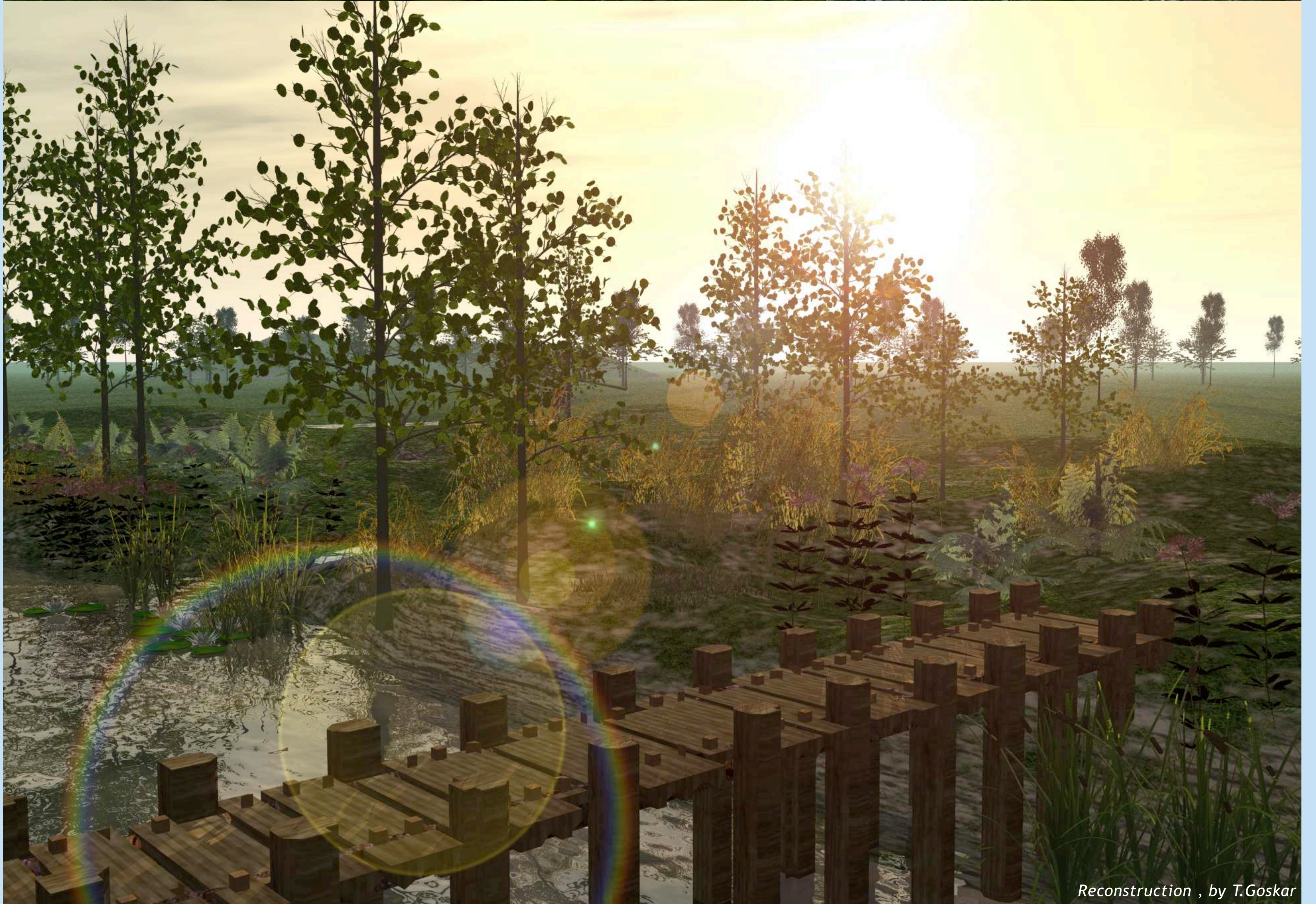


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Artists impression, by K.Nichols



Reconstruction , by T.Goskar

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