

The History of Milton Keynes IN 100 Objects... ...the first 15

MK City Discovery Centre

Tusk of the Straight-Tusked Elephant (*Elephas (Palaeoloxodon) antiquus*)



This tusk was found by one of the construction workers employed in excavating Willen Lake (North) in 1974. Identified as a probably a Straight-Tusked Elephant, it closely resembled the African Elephant, but would have been up to twice as big. It roamed right across Eurasia (separated from Britain about 8,000 years ago). Evidence for human hunting of this elephant has been found at other sites.

Geology of Milton Keynes

The solid geology is predominantly Oxford Clay. Overlying this is a layer of drift material - boulder clay of varying thickness, with terrace gravels and alluvium occupying the river valleys. The tusk was found in the base layer of gravel, approx. 2.5m deep from the present ground surface.



Excavation work at Willen Lake which opened in 1977



Climate

Over the last c. 500,000 year global climate has oscillated between cold (glacial) and warm (interglacial) climates, similar to modern, on a roughly 100,000 year cycle. The straight tusked elephant pre-dates the last Ice Age and roamed in the Milton Keynes area during warmer temperate periods between Ice Ages. The Straight-tusked Elephant cleared large areas of woodland allowing other mammals to move in like the mammoth and rhinoceros.

