

Our ancestors have lived in the immediate vicinity of York since the Neolithic period (c.4000 ? 2000 BC). Much of the surrounding Vale of York was probably unsuitable for settlement at this time because of its poorly drained and heavy clay soil which made farming difficult.

However, parts of the city, including the main campus of York University, sit on a moraine, a ridge of high ground left behind by retreating glaciers after the last Ice Age. This provides well-drained and sandy soils which were probably cultivated throughout prehistory. The moraine also offered a usable route joining the Yorkshire Wolds to the east and the Yorkshire Dales to the west.

Little is known of York in the Iron Age (c. 750 BC ? AD 71), although when the Romans arrived it is known that they found a cultivated landscape not unlike parts of the valley of the river Ouse in nearby rural areas today. The Roman name for York, Eburacum, probably derives from a native name meaning the place of the yew trees. Helping to fill this gap in out historic understanding of the area is the discovery of a prehistoric settlement believed to date back 2,500 years unearthed on the ring road in York in July this year. City of York Council and York Archaeological Trust made the find at the Wetherby Road roundabout on the A1237 during junction improvements.

A large ring ditch, described as "One of the biggest to be unearthed in York", was found, along with fragments of pottery. Other finds included fragments of volcanic rock which does not occur locally, in what is believed to be a hearth pit. Ian Milsted, Head of Archaeology for York Archaeological Trust, said 'We're excited to have recovered this important information and will now analyse the finds to understand the story of the people who lived here before the Romans founded the city.

Finds have also been made to the north of the enclosure with a series of other ditches that may indicate field boundaries associated with the settlement.