

# Lost Footpaths, Footbridges and Bridleways

The earliest evidence of human presence in Rutland, so far, comes from an archaeological excavation in 2000 at Glaston, three miles due south of Rutland Water. Here, a worked flint was found amongst animal bones, including woolly rhinoceros, mammoth, reindeer and wolverine, which have been dated to about 30,000 years BC. This is the Upper Palaeolithic period, when this part of the world was in a warmer spell during the last Ice Age. The visitors were a party of hunter-gatherers who were exploring the area in search of food. The landscape would then have been lush grassland with outcrops of flat-topped sandstone boulders. However, over the next 20,000 years or so, oak forests became well established.

From the beginning of the Bronze Age (2000 BC), woodlands were being cleared for temporary settlements, and the tracks and ridgeways established then are no doubt the origins of some of the routes we walk and ride today. A great deal of evidence for Roman and Anglo-Saxon occupation was discovered before and during the construction of Rutland Water, indicating that the valley was then well occupied, and almost certainly by then, criss-crossed with tracks between settlements (*see* Chapter 18 – Brooches, Bathhouses and Bones – Archaeology in the Gwash Valley). However, the majority of Rutland's villages were established in the late Anglo-Saxon period when the routes of most of the present footpaths, bridleways and roads were first established.

Following the acquisition of land for Rutland Water, all the footpaths and bridleways inside this area were closed to public access and replaced by a concessionary perimeter track.



*Above: The footbridge over the Gwash (X on the map) which was south-west of Brake Spinney (Jim Levisohn ARPS)*

*This map indicates the approximate locations of some of the more important public footpaths, footbridges and bridleways which existed prior to the construction of Rutland Water (RO)*

