

Excavation of a Prehistoric and Romano-British Settlement at Haverhill Business Park, Sturmer, Essex, 2003

The western portion of the Haverhill Business Park was excavated by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Field Team between 06/05/03 and 27/06/03. A total of 203 features were revealed and excavated. Of these, 17 were of prehistoric date, 114 of Late Iron Age/Early Roman date, 49 of Mid Roman date and 5 were post-medieval. A further 18 features could not be reliably allocated to one of these periods.

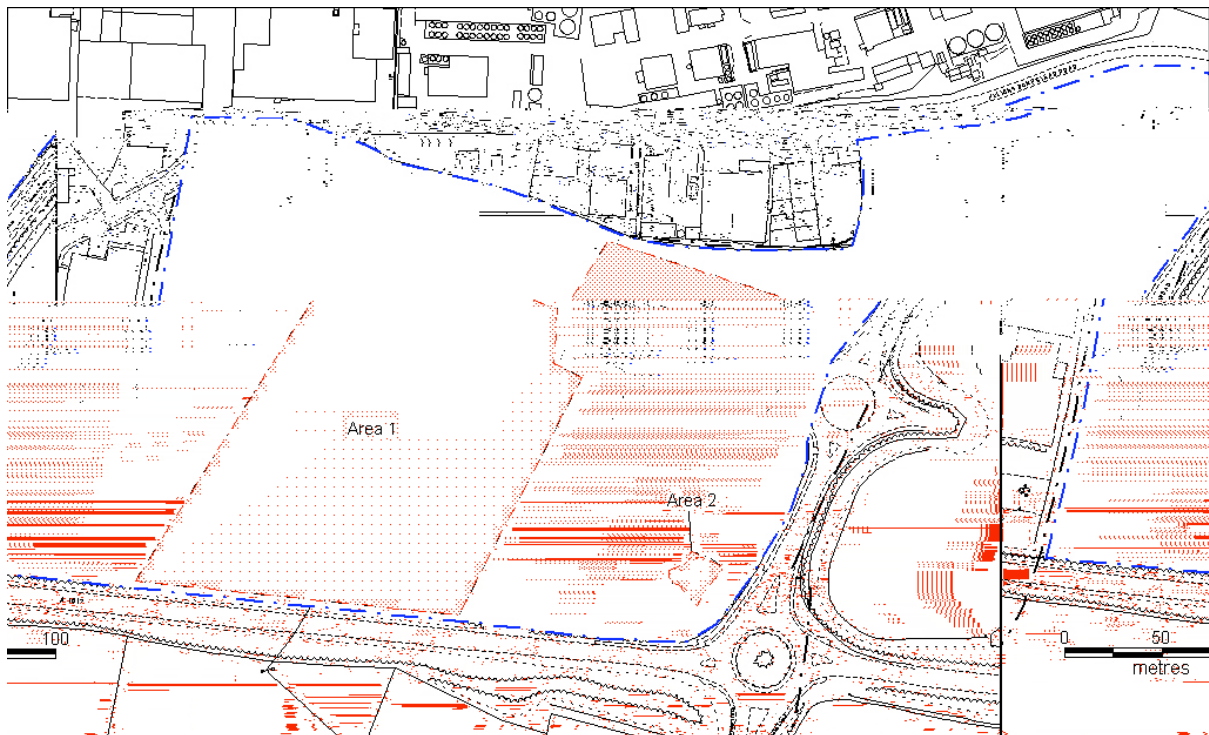


Figure 1. Excavation areas.

Prehistoric

Work is still ongoing on the pottery recovered from the features of this period and a definitive date has not yet been arrived at. However, on balance it is currently suggested that these features are of mid to late Iron Age date (c 300 BC to 25 BC).

The period is represented by the corner of a substantial enclosure ditch, with a smaller earlier ditch running into it down the slope, possibly intended to serve as a drainage feature. Within the area enclosed by this ditch a group of seven pits containing cooking debris and other general refuse were closely associated with a small four-post structure (possibly including a fifth post that served as a repair) of a type usually interpreted as a 'granary' in the latter part of the prehistoric period. A

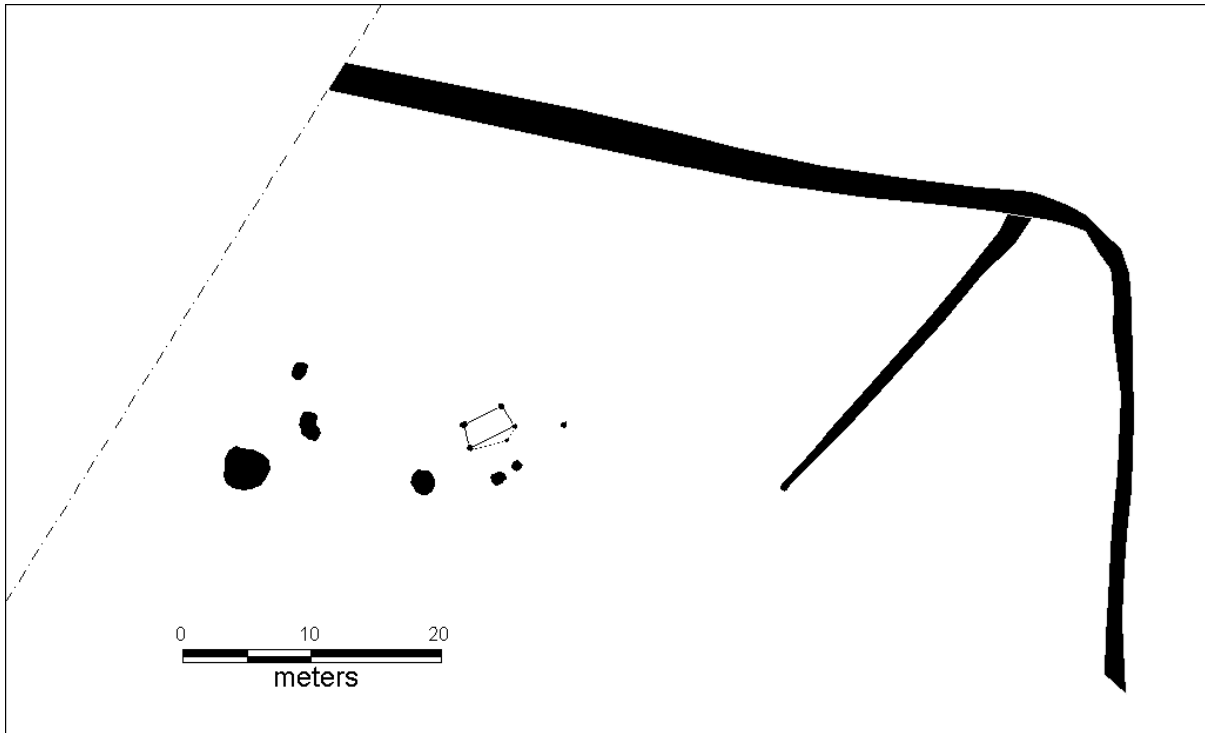


Figure 2. Prehistoric features belonging to Period 1.

Late Iron Age/Early Roman

This period was divided into two phases. The first of these (represented by the blue features in Figure 3) spanned *c.* 25 BC to AD 50 and saw the establishment of a substantial enclosure system, including a driveway leading into the site from its south-western corner. The main central enclosure in this phase contained two 'houses' defined by pennanular ring ditches representing eaves gullies surrounding round structures. Little other evidence of these structures survived, despite the fact that they were almost certainly post-built. The degree of truncation meant that shallow features did not survive on the site. A full range of domestic/rural activity was represented, with pit groups and probable animal pens included among the other features.

The second phase (the green features in Figure 3) of Roman occupation spanned *c.* AD 50 to AD 150 and was most notable for the development of the enclosure system, which became more formalised and regular in shape in contrast to the more haphazard pattern of the earlier boundaries. During this phase the central part of the site contained a large oval pond. Environmental samples taken from its fills yielded several species of small mollusc shell typically found in muddy, partly overgrown/shaded ponds. Dating the origins of the pond is difficult, as is determining whether it was deliberately cut or was formed naturally. The pottery recovered from its fills suggests that it had started to silt up around the middle of the first century AD and that this continued well into the second century. No structures or buildings could be identified in this second Romano-British phase,

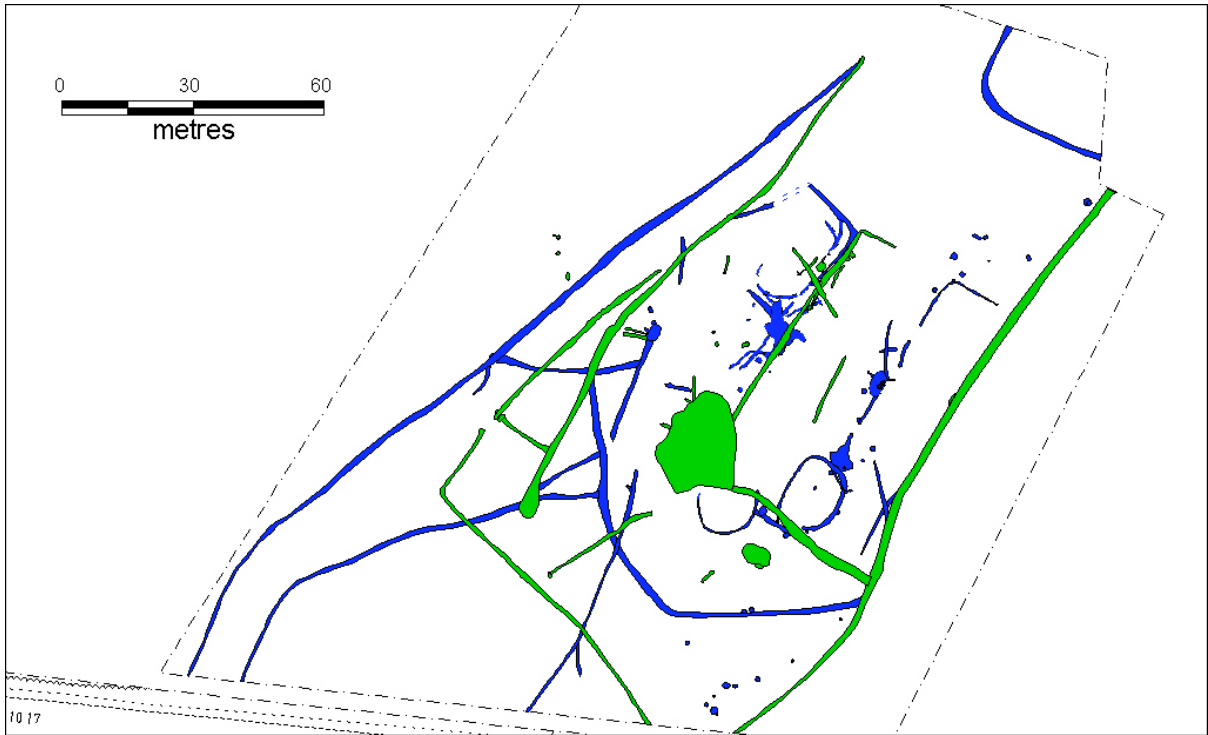


Figure 3. Period 2 features.