



Excavations at Witchford

Land South of Main Street, Witchford, Cambridgeshire



Aerial view of the site: many excavated slots across features are now water-filled! The dark stripes and patches are unexcavated archaeology.

The Site

The excavation has revealed a settlement of Middle to Late Iron Age date with sporadic Roman activity afterwards. The settlement remains are indicated by numerous ditches and gullies which represent various property(?) boundaries, animal pens and enclosures. The most notable are curvilinear or ring gullies which demark individual house sites- a distinctive form of structure for the Iron Age. The settlement is overlain by ridge and furrow field system of medieval date.



View of the site at an early stage of the fieldwork.



Section across a typical gully and ditch on the site (Scales of 0.1m, 1m and 2m).

Finds

This site has yielded a diverse assortment of finds: bones of the various domesticated animals utilised on the site were found. The most notable of the bone artefacts is a worked piece with a hole, suggesting use as a sewing needle or similar implement.

The hundreds of pottery sherds recovered have provided our dating evidence and suggest that we have a long-lived settlement probably ranging from as early as the 5th century BC through to the 1st century BC. After the site was abandoned it lay within an area farmed in Roman times and again in the medieval period.



Pottery during excavation. Scales 10cm and 20cm

A number of metalwork items were found including a Roman coin and a brooch. The brooch, possibly of 'Hod Hill' (Dorset) type, can be dated to the first century AD, and has been associated with use by the Roman military.



Left: Worked bone needle, Right: 'Hod Hill' style brooch (Scales: 5cm)



Human skull and long bone. Scale: 20cm

Human remains, including parts of a skull were unearthed from one of the ditches. Cemeteries and burials as we might think of them, rarely appear in the archaeological record for the Iron Age, so while the presence of human remains seemingly lying about in a ditch may seem peculiar or undignified to us, is not an uncommon observation for the time period.



Witchford old and new.