

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST:

CASE STUDY

ARCHAEOLOGY AT PROLOGIS PARK PINEHAM



Set in the Nene Valley on the edge of Northampton, Prologis Park Pineham lies within a rich archaeological landscape. Keen to mitigate any potential impact from the development of the site, we have commissioned archaeological investigations to record, recover and analyse artefacts and remains. Most of all, we are keen to understand what these findings mean; to know more about how the site was used in previous centuries and gain an insight into the lives of the people who settled there.

The first investigation was carried out by Northampton Archaeology for Prologis in 2006 before we started work on the first phase of the park. This work found that there has been human activity on the site since the Neolithic/early Bronze Age period through to modern times.



Archaeologists at work



James Wright

Vice President, Market Officer

HUMAN ACTIVITY ON THE SITE SINCE THE NEOLITHIC/EARLY BRONZE AGE PERIOD

CASE STUDY



Excavation at the site



1. Aerial view of the excavation at the site



2. Aerial view of the excavation at the site

To summarise:

- The earliest findings were Neolithic/early Bronze Age flint tools, which were recovered from the topsoil. In the area known as Pineham Barns, Bronze Age pottery was recovered and funerary remains from a possible barrow and cremation cemetery
- In the late Iron Age, probably the 2nd to 1st century BC, a farming settlement was established on the site. Several features across the site, including a roundhouse and three pits, which are probably the remains of the initial settlement, contained late Iron Age pottery
- By the late Iron Age/early Roman period in the 1st century AD, the settlement expanded and a series of ditches were constructed to enclose the nucleus of the original settlement and the outlying areas that might have been fields or paddocks
- The Romano-British settlement was reorganised during the late 3rd and 4th centuries AD and finds from this period include two cremation burials, accompanied by luxury goods such as Roman fineware and conical glass jugs
- The settlement seems to have been abandoned by the late 4th century, but an early Saxon spearhead and shield boss fragment suggest that it was possibly used for Saxon burials in the 5th-6th centuries AD
- By the medieval period, the site had been incorporated into an open field system of ridge and furrow
- In the late medieval period, the land was probably converted to pasture and enclosed during the 18th and 19th centuries. With the levelling of the ridge and furrow, the land has more recently been used for arable farming

The next major investigation took place in 2016, when MOLA excavated the land that will become the second phase of the park. Working in a similar way to Northampton Archaeology 10 years before, MOLA has recorded its findings, which it is now analysing to interpret its significance.

We are keen to see the final report, which we expect in 2017, because we are particularly interested to see whether MOLA's work sheds further light on the lives, culture and practices of the people who inhabited the site during the Iron Age and the Roman occupation.

It will also be fascinating to know whether the new dig provides any further insight into possible Saxon presence on the site. We have some evidence of burials, but did the Saxons also settle and cultivate the site? With luck, the next chapter of the Pineham archaeology story will provide the answers.

When we have the full history, we will create a series of information boards that will be installed on site, so that the information is easily accessible for everyone who is interested. While we build for the future, we are always careful to understand and remember the past.