

Manor Farm, A Prehistoric Monumental Landscape



Three Neolithic cursus monuments, (long rectilinear ditch and bank enclosures) and a late Neolithic hengiform monument (pit circle) have so far been uncovered at Manor Farm. All three cursus monuments had internal banks, although these no longer survive, and the ditches of Cursus 2 and 3 were breached by narrow staggered causeways. Little material culture was recovered from the cursus ditches, although in situ material from the uppermost deposits prove that the monuments had been completely infilled by the Early Bronze Age.

The hengiform monument yielded a large assemblage of Grooved Ware pottery (4900 to 4200 years old), and contained the cremated remains of an adult human.

Cursus 2 looking northeast along the southern ditch



The pit alignment

Cursus monuments are broadly dated to the middle Neolithic (approx. 5,500 to 5,000 years ago). These enigmatic monuments regularly disregard natural contours in the landscape although they are often found in riverine locations, either respecting or even 'crossing' river courses, as seen at Manor Farm. Although their precise function may never be understood, the monuments seem to enclose and preserve a space in the landscape, a space often subjected to localised forest clearance. The internal banks and limited causeways seem to restrict and control access and movement, whilst contemporary activity within the monuments themselves has left very little trace.



Activity in the Middle Bronze Age is represented by scattered settlement features including a ring gully, field systems, burnt stone pits and cremation deposits, whilst a probable Iron Age pit alignment marks the only activity dating to this period. Two Roman trackways and several quarry pits have also been excavated.



The Hengiform and associated pottery