

## Wennington Hall Farm, Havering

Site type: Greenfield

Fieldwork: Archaeological Solutions (2014 ongoing)

GLHER Records: [Aerial Photographic Assessment at Wennington Hall Farm](#)

[Geophysical Survey at Wennington Hall Farm](#)

[Land at Wennington Hall Farm: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation](#)

---

### Proposed scheme

Mineral extraction of sand and gravel from 26 hectares of agricultural land.

### Archaeological response

The Lower Thames gravels are known to have high archaeological potential. At Wennington, a square enclosure had been recognised on aerial photographs as a soilmark since the 1960s. A phased process of desk-based and aerial photographic assessment and targeted trial trenching confirmed the presence of later prehistoric archaeology and informed the planning decision. Beyond the square enclosure, other trial trenches found features neither visible on aerial photographs nor detected by geophysical survey indicating that a much more extensive later Bronze Age landscape and settlement including pits, postholes and boundary ditches covered much of the site.

Planning conditions required an archaeological 'strip, map and sample' type excavation with special provision for preservation in-situ if nationally important archaeology was encountered. The excavation has been conducted in phases following topsoil stripping in advance of mineral extraction.

### Outcomes

The square enclosure ditch had two phases of use, the later one contained a layer of rubbish, mainly pottery of late Bronze Age date. Inside the enclosure were at least two post-built roundhouses, one of which contained a hearth, as well as a quern stone) and a loom weight; all indicative of domestic activity. In the centre of the enclosure was a small four-post structure, built with robust postholes that would have held large timbers. A comparable structure was also located just outside the southern edge of the enclosure, opposite the entrance.

The most exciting find was made in the southern arm of the enclosure ditch where a group of four bronze 'founders hoards' were discovered. The first hoard contained 124 bronze items, and the remaining three hoards produced a further 319 items.

Most of the items are socketed axes. Other objects include spear heads; gouges; fragments of swords, daggers or rapiers; components of scabbards; loops from harnesses or similar fittings, and ingots. These implements were manufactured in the late Bronze Age, probably between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

This remarkable find is one of the largest collections of Bronze Age metalwork ever found in Britain. It illustrates the value of using metal-detectors on site but also unlike many such discoveries it was made and properly excavated by archaeologists. As a find of more than two objects of prehistoric base metal, it qualified as Treasure as defined in the Treasure Act (1996) (Designation Order 2002) and was acquired by the London Museum after a coroner's hearing with the landowner receiving a financial reward.

The discovery received national press coverage and provided the centre-piece for a special exhibition at the Museum of London (Docklands).

Fieldwork has continued across the quarry revealing droveways and fields around and overlying the square enclosure. Once this has been completed a post-excavation assessment will be carried out.



*Upper level of a late Bronze Age hoard (the scale is 30cm) (photo courtesy Archaeological Solutions)*

© Archaeological Solutions