

KP 410

This area was first identified as an area of archaeological potential during the watching brief on the topsoil stripping. In addition to irregular patches of large river-washed pebbles on the surface, thought to be grave markers, a carved stone with a Farsi inscription was found on the edge of the easement.

Because of the tight time constraints on construction for the Kura west river crossing, and the very restricted access to the river crossing construction site, it was decided to wait until the pipe for the river crossing had been installed, before carrying out evaluation of the area.

There was a brief opportunity to excavate a small evaluation trench, by machine, on the temporary running track, approximately 8m to the northeast of the BTC centreline on 21<sup>st</sup> March. This showed soil marks indicating the presence of a number of large pits, and a patch of large stones of similar appearance to grave fills seen elsewhere on the pipeline.

The BTC pipe was winched through the tunnel beneath the Kura on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2005, and the surface was cleared of obstructions, in particular the rollers that supported the pipe-string during winching, the following day. This allowed further, more comprehensive, archaeological evaluation to be carried out on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April.

A 65m-long trench was excavated using a Komatsu PC400 with blade welded across the teeth of a standard toothed bucket. The trench was approximately 2.20m wide. Excavation was carried out under the direction of an archaeologist, ensuring careful removal of the ground in shallow spits.

Over much of the trench, the ground proved to be archaeologically quite sterile. Machining was continued to a depth of up to 1.5m, to ensure that there were no unseen cultural deposits. There was typically up to 1m depth of dark grey silt grading into a buff, fine gritty silt. At the base of the trench, bands of coarse gravel were exposed. These were of river-washed pebbles, typically 5-7cm across but with some much larger stones, in a silty matrix.

Three cut features were noted: In the southwest side of the trench, between 20.60m and 24.00m from the east end, a large irregular pit was visible in section. This was up to 1m deep and had a disturbed fill containing modern bottle glass and partially rotted wood. On the opposite side of the trench, centred at 26m from the eastern end, a circular pit, 1.50m in diameter and 1.20m deep contained cattle bone, including two scapulas, but no other finds. Between 35.90m and 37.10m from the eastern end, a steep-sided pit 90cm deep in the south section of the trench had a grey, ashy, charcoal-rich fill. Cattle bones were noted, probably from a complete articulated skeleton.

The only cultural artefacts retrieved were two sherds of medieval pottery, one unglazed earthenware and one with a splashed pale-green glaze decoration, and a copper alloy spherical cowbell. These all came from unstratified surface layers.

The measured GPS co-ordinates of the ends of the trench were: 8537662 4566643 and 8537650 4566713. The cowbell was at 8537656 4566607.