

**SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD  
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****ARCHAEOLOGY AT HATCH FURLONG, EWELL, 2006: FIRST INTERIM REPORT*****Introduction***

The long-planned initial archaeological evaluation at Hatch Furlong, Ewell, was finally carried out between the 22<sup>nd</sup> April and the 15<sup>th</sup> May, by students from Birkbeck, Faculty of Continuing Education, University of London, and by members of the Epsom and Ewell History and Archaeology Society (EEHAS) and the Surrey Archaeological Society (SAS). This brief report summarises some of the results.

Hatch Furlong is owned by the National Trust and lies on a tongue of North Downs chalk overlooking the southern outskirts of the village. As all members of EEHAS and SAS will know, Ewell was a Roman settlement on Stane Street, the main road that linked London with Chichester. Stane Street was probably constructed in the years following the Roman conquest of AD 43 and the Ewell settlement was sited close to the road and the springs lying at the foot of the Downs.

The county Sites and Monuments Record contains references to a series of mainly Roman finds in the immediate area of Hatch Furlong (see SyAC 84 (1997), 123-41). These include a number of 1<sup>st</sup> and early-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD pits/shafts or wells discovered during nineteenth century chalk quarrying on the south side of Cheam Road (now Homebase). Further finds made in the 1970s, within Hatch Furlong itself, include a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century chalk-cut shaft, 12 feet (3.65m) in depth, and what appeared at the time to be a short length of stone wall. Taken together, the various finds hint at the existence of considerable activity on the higher ground overlooking Stane Street and the Ewell settlement. It was this activity that the evaluation set out to explore.

***Interim results***

Five trenches were opened by machine at the south end of Hatch Furlong: three were sited to re-locate the features discovered in the 1970s, and two upslope to the east sought to examine others identified in the 1970s and during a geophysical survey conducted by Birkbeck in November 2004. All trenches produced natural features of geological interest and others of Roman date at no great depth, together with traces of later agricultural and horticultural activity. The present summary concentrates on the Roman features; dating is based on provisional spot-dating of the pottery only.

**Trench 1:** This was sited to re-locate the 12 foot deep shaft excavated in the 1970s. The shaft, which contained the remains of a number of dogs and a cattle skull, was re-located at the northern end of the trench. A second shaft was found two metres to the east with upper fills dated to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century, though the evaluation did not proceed any deeper than 1.20m. Both shafts were bounded to the north by a shallow linear ditch aligned E-W. The western portion of the ditch contained 2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery and its eastern portion contained late 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century pottery. A sequence of intercutting 2<sup>nd</sup> century pits or shallow quarries lay to the south.

**Trench 2:** This was sited south of Trench 1 to re-locate the 'stone wall' found in the 1970s. Though quickly achieved, the 'wall' proved to form part of a narrow rectangular flue belonging to a small oven or drier. The oven appeared to sit within the upper fill of a large shallow 2<sup>nd</sup> century quarry which occupied the southwestern corner of the trench. The quarry fill had been cut into by several other features including the butt end of a linear ditch dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Charcoal was present in some quantity in the vicinity of the oven and may represent material raked out from the flue; samples are undergoing study.

**Trench 5:** This lay immediately to the south of Trench 2 and was sited to try and define an area trenched in the 1970s. To judge from the evidence of the machine-cut sections it fell within the eastern part of the backfilled trench, and may help to shed light on the contexts from which a large quantity of Roman pottery (including much late 2<sup>nd</sup> century samian) was reportedly recovered.

**Trench 3:** This lay upslope and to the east of Trench 2, and was sited to locate a large anomaly noted in the earlier geophysical survey. Although the anomaly proved to be of geological origin a number of Roman features lay within the trench. The most substantial of these proved to be the top of a large shaft or well, lined with un-mortared flint rubble. Again, the evaluation did not proceed below 1.20m in depth. Pottery recovered from the construction trench may suggest that the feature was dug in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, though finds from the mouth of the in-filled shaft indicate that the latter remained open into the 4<sup>th</sup> century. At least one 'placed deposit', an inverted 2<sup>nd</sup> century jar buried in a small pit, was located adjacent to the mouth of the shaft.

**Trench 4:** This lay north of Trench 3 and east of Trench 1 and was sited to try and locate a 'chalk platform' reported in the 1970s. No platform was found, although the surface of the natural chalk lay across much of the trench. The principal point of interest lay at the western end of the trench in the form of a series of intercutting shallow pits or quarries. These contained a range of finds of late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century date, including quantities of broken roof tile and some box flue tile.

### ***Conclusion***

The site was clearly honeycombed with Roman pits or quarries and at least three deep chalk-cut shafts, one of which was lined with substantial quantities of flint rubble. It is possible that the two shafts in Trench 1 were screened off from other activity by a linear ditch. These various features probably encompassed a range of utilitarian and non-utilitarian functions. Furthermore, the quantity of ceramic building material and iron fittings recovered from several of the features in Trenches 3 and 4 hints at the existence of a substantial building somewhere in the vicinity. Detailed analysis of the finds (pottery, building material, ironwork, animal bone and charcoal etc) has yet to be completed, but early indications suggest that there were at least two main phases of Roman activity dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries and late 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. This appears to be somewhat later than the 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century activity noted during the nineteenth century work on the Homebase site further south.

If the archaeology proved extensive and rewarding, the hoped-for student and community involvement was just as impressive. Training in archaeological techniques was given to 35 Birkbeck students over two hectic weeks; work over three (equally hectic) weekends was carried out by up to 30 local volunteers; two open days attracted over 400 visitors, and 6 school parties were conducted around the site. Further tours were given to members of EEHAS and SAS; to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and 12 Councillors from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council; and also to the local MP, Chris Grayling, Shadow Transport Spokesman. Articles appeared in local newspapers and a 'live' interview was recorded with Three Counties Radio. Furthermore, the Epsom & Ewell Cine Club were ever-present on site and their record of the work will receive an initial screening at the EEHAS meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

### ***Acknowledgements***

It remains to thank the very many institutions and individuals who made the work possible. It was a genuine team effort. The evaluation derived great support from: The National Trust; Birkbeck, Faculty of Continuing Education; Surrey County Archaeological Unit; Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society; Surrey Archaeological Society; Council for British Archaeology (South East); Bourne Hall Museum; The Museum of London; Surrey County Council; James Simister (Chessington Adult Education Service); and Martin and Alan Wright (PGSD Ltd).

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The site was co-directed by the writers; the training excavation trenches were supervised by Mick Miles (Birkbeck) and Becky Lambert (SCAU); the weekend trenches were supervised by Alan Hall, Richard Savage and Phil Stanley (SAS Roman Studies Group); finds supervision was provided by Phil Jones (SCAU), assisted by Frank Pemberton (EEHAS); on-site wet-sieving was coordinated by Geraldine Missig (Birkbeck Environmental Archaeology Group); metal detecting duties were in the capable hands of Bill Meads and John Coles; site tours and handling sessions for schools and members of the public were provided by David Brooks (Bourne Hall Museum) and Abby Guinness (SCAU). Finally, special thanks are due to Caroline Thackray and David Kennington (National Trust) for their unflappable assistance regarding permissions and access; to Robin Densem and Natalie Ping (Birkbeck) for their smooth handling of the site logistics, and to Peggy Bedwell and Margaret Nobbs (EEHAS) for services above and beyond the call of duty on all fronts.

Jon Cotton & Harvey Sheldon  
July 2006

## Student dig explores secrets of ancient Ewell

Local MP visits the site thought to be a religious complex

A Birkbeck training excavation in Ewell sought to reassess evidence of Roman activity found in the 1970s. The work focused on Hatch Furlong, where earlier digging revealed pottery, glass and coins, together with traces of a stone building and a 14-foot deep chalk shaft containing the bones of dogs, which may have been offered to the Roman gods as sacrifices.

These discoveries hint at the existence of a religious complex on the higher ground overlooking Stane Street – the Roman main road from London to Chichester – and the Roman settlement of Ewell.

Co-director of the site, Birkbeck's Harvey Sheldon says: "Our aims were to locate the find spots precisely and characterise the site. There appear to be a good number of shafts and other pits with ritual placed deposits. The stone wall found previously seems to be part of a large Late Roman oven. It does look like there were shrines and deliberate attempts to communicate with the underworld: feasts and ceremonies would not be unexpected. A report is being prepared and the National Trust will use the findings to manage Hatch Furlong's archaeology."

The local Conservative MP for Epsom and Ewell and shadow transport secretary, Chris Grayling, visited the dig, along with a number of local school children and visitors to site open days. Chris says he was "intrigued" by the work. "Something like this brings local history to life in a way that no text book could ever do."

He was equally impressed by the Birkbeck students on the site. "Birkbeck is a wonderful institution, it's unique and a great way of giving people the chance to

make a step-change in their career without having the often great difficulty of giving up work."

One such student is Claire Cock-Starkey (28), in the third year of her BA History and Archaeology and a full-time as an assistant editor. "I chose Birkbeck because I couldn't study and have a full-time job," says Claire. "The first time I did a degree I regretted not doing history and archaeology, so I thought I'd go back and do what I wanted to do."

Then there are people who simply signed up for the practical dig experience, such as Tessa Gittens: "I'm enjoying it enormously. It is a wonderful interest in retirement and it's nice to be part of it." Sally Redhead, also retired, adds: "What's really impressive is how the local community is so involved. It's a real collaborative effort."

"There is a good crowd of students here," continues Harvey. "Some are tasting archaeology for the first time and some are more experienced. They find it interesting and obviously that enthusiasm communicates itself."

The dig was carried out between 22 April and 7 May, led by Harvey Sheldon of Birkbeck and Jon Cotton of the Epsom and Ewell Local History and Archaeology Society/Museum of London. The excavation was funded by grants from Surrey County Council, Epsom and Ewell History and Archaeology Society, Surrey Archaeological Society and the Council for British Archaeology South East. The work was completed on behalf of the National Trust, who own the site.

For details about Archaeology at Birkbeck, call 020 7631 6627, email [archaeology@fce.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:archaeology@fce.bbk.ac.uk) or visit [www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/archaeology](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/archaeology)



Above: The bearded face of Silenus, one of the lost gods of Roman Ewell, looks out from this pottery fragment found in the area

## Grant boost for labs

Geography research was given a welcome boost with the opening of joint Birkbeck/UCL thermodynamics and fluids laboratories at UCL in March.

Dr Diane Horn, a senior lecturer in Birkbeck's School of Geography, shares the facilities, which were funded by a £850,000 Science Research Investment Fund II grant. New equipment for the lab will measure waves and current velocities. "It's exciting that geography students have access to the labs," says Dr Horn. "I hope these state-of-the-art facilities lead to increased interest in physical geography at Birkbeck."



Registered Charity No: 272098

ISSN 0585-9980

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# Bulletin 397

November 2006



**HATCH FARM, EWELL.** *Site Supervisor Richard Savage in a flint-lined hole. Is it a ritual shaft?*

## ARCHAEOLOGY AT HATCH FURLONG, EWELL, 2006

### INTERIM REPORT

*Jonathan Cotton and Harvey Sheldon*

#### Introduction

The long-planned initial archaeological evaluation at Hatch Furlong, Ewell, was carried out between the 22nd April and the 15th May, by students from Birkbeck, Faculty of Continuing Education, University of London, and by members of the Epsom and Ewell History and Archaeology Society (EEHAS) and the Surrey Archaeological Society (SyAS). The student training element of the project was led by staff from Birkbeck and the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU). This brief report summarises some of the results.

Hatch Furlong is a plot of land bisected by the Ewell by-pass and has been in the ownership of the National Trust since the late 1920s. The site is on an elevated spur of North Downs chalk that juts down into the centre of the village. As members of EEHAS and SAS will be well aware, Ewell was a Roman settlement on Stane Street, the main road that linked London with Chichester. Stane Street was probably constructed in the early years following the conquest and the Ewell settlement was sited close to the road and to the springs that lie at the foot of the Downs.

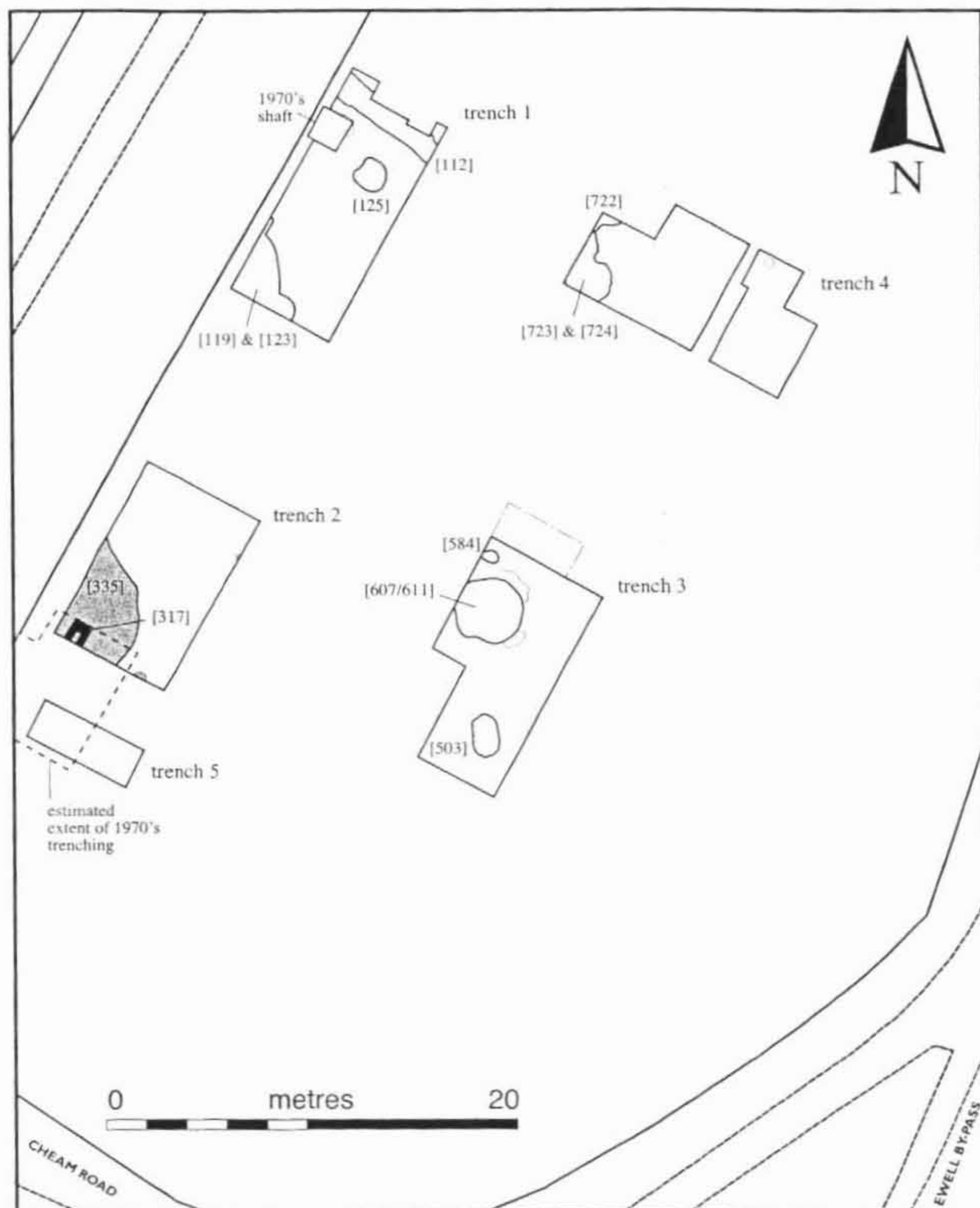
The county Sites and Monuments Record contains references to a series of mainly Roman finds in the immediate area of Hatch Furlong. These include a number of 1st and early-2nd century AD shafts or wells discovered during nineteenth century chalk quarrying on the south side of the Cheam Road (the site now occupied by Homebase). Further finds made within Hatch Furlong itself in the 1970s included a late 2nd century chalk-cut shaft, 12 feet (3.65m) in depth containing the remains of a number of young dogs, and what appeared at the time to be a short length of stone wall. Taken together, these various discoveries hinted at the existence of considerable activity on the higher ground overlooking Stane Street and the Ewell settlement. It was this activity that the present evaluation set out to explore.

#### Interim results

Five trenches were opened by machine at the south end of Hatch Furlong (see plan): three were sited to re-locate the features discovered in the 1970s, and two upslope to the east sought to examine others identified in the 1970s and during a geophysical survey conducted by Birkbeck in November 2004. All trenches produced geological features trending north-south and archaeological features of Roman date at no great depth, together with traces of later agricultural and horticultural activity. The present summary concentrates on the Roman features; dating is based on a provisional spot-dating of the pottery.

Trench 1 was sited to locate the 12 foot deep shaft emptied in the 1970s, which was visible as a shallow depression in the modern field surface. The evaluation confirmed this and located a second probable shaft (context [125]) two metres to the south-east of the first. The upper fills of this second feature dated to the late 3rd-4th century, though excavation did not proceed any deeper than 1.20m. Both features were bounded to the north by a shallow linear ditch aligned SE-NW (context [112]). The western portion of the ditch contained 2nd century pottery and its eastern portion contained late 3rd-4th century pottery. The ditch fills also contained a number of fragments of dog crania (Geraldine Missig, pers comm). A sequence of inter-cutting 2nd century pits or shallow quarries lay to the south (contexts [119] & [123]).

Trench 2 was sited south of Trench 1 to re-locate the 'stone wall' found in the 1970s. Though quickly achieved, the 'wall' appeared to form part of a narrow rectangular flue belonging to a small oven or drier (context [317]). The flue was constructed of unmortared tile, flint nodules, and chalk and sandstone blocks, one of which had the date '1979' scratched into it. The oven sat within the upper fills of a large shallow 2nd



HATCH FARM, EWELL. Plan of the excavations

century quarry (context [335]), which occupied the south western corner of the trench. The quarry backfill had been cut into by several other features including the butt end of a linear ditch (context [327]) dated to the 4th century and aligned SE-NW (i.e. parallel to ditch [112] some 30m to the north in Trench 1). Charcoal was present in some quantity in the vicinity of the oven and may represent material connected with its use; samples are undergoing study.

Trench 5 lay immediately to the south of Trench 2 and was sited to locate an area intensively trenched in the 1970s. To judge from the evidence of the machine-cut

sections it clipped the SE corner of the backfilled trench, and may help to shed light on the contexts from which a large quantity of Roman pottery (including much late 2nd century riveted samian) was reportedly recovered.

Trench 3 lay upslope and to the east of Trench 2, and was sited to locate a large anomaly noted in the 2004 geophysical survey. Although the anomaly proved to be of geological origin a number of Roman features lay within the trench. The most substantial of these proved to be the mouth of another probable shaft or well (contexts [607]/[611]), lined with un-mortared flint rubble (see photograph). The evaluation did not proceed below 1.20m in depth, though probing suggested that the feature continued down for at least a further two metres. Pottery recovered from the backfill of the construction trench suggests that it was dug some time in the 2nd century, though finds from the uppermost fills of the shaft appear to indicate that the latter remained open into the 4th century. An inverted 2nd century jar was buried in a small pit (context [584]) adjacent to the mouth of the feature. Tool marks visible in the side of a late 2nd-3rd century shallow sub-rectangular pit (context [503]) at the south end of Trench 3 suggested the use of a narrow pointed tool (akin to a modern pickaxe) to excavate the soft chalk.

Trench 4 lay north of Trench 3 and east of Trench 1 and was sited to try and locate a 'chalk platform' reported in the 1970s. No platform was found, although it is possible that it lay beyond the trench footprint to the east. The principal point of interest lay at the western end of the trench in the form of a series of shallow inter-cutting pits or quarries (contexts [722], [723] & [724]). These contained a range of finds of late 2nd or early 3rd century date. Notable amongst them were quantities of broken roof and floor tile, together with a number of iron objects including an ox-goad – one of several recorded from the site. No fewer than five fossil sea urchins were recovered from this trench, one from quarry fill [726] and the others from soil layers overlying; a sixth example was found in Trench 2.

### **Conclusion**

Archaeologically, the site proved to have been honeycombed with shallow inter-cutting Roman pits or quarries (Trenches 1, 2 and 4); that in Trench 2 contained a small oven or drier with a rectangular flue. In addition, there were at least three substantial chalk-cut features (Trenches 1 and 3), the mouth of one of which was lined with substantial quantities of un-mortared flint rubble. Furthermore, it is possible that the two deep features in Trench 1 were screened off by a linear ditch. The digging and backfilling of these various features probably encompassed a range of utilitarian and non-utilitarian activities; the presence of fossil sea urchins on several of the county's Roman temple sites might be noted in this context too.

The quantity of ceramic building material recovered from several of the features in Trenches 3 and 4 hints at the existence of a building somewhere in the vicinity, though no certain traces were identified during the current work. Detailed analysis of the finds (pottery, building material, ironwork, animal bone and charcoal etc) has yet to be completed, but early indications suggest that there were at least two main phases of Roman activity dating to the 2nd-3rd centuries and late 3rd-4th centuries. This appears to be somewhat later than the 1st and early 2nd century activity discovered in the course of the nineteenth century chalk quarrying further south.

If the archaeology proved extensive and rewarding, the hoped-for student and community involvement was just as impressive. Training in archaeological techniques was given to 35 Birkbeck students over two hectic weeks; work over three (equally hectic) weekends was carried out by up to 30 local volunteers; two open days attracted over 400 visitors, and 6 school parties were conducted around the site. Further tours were given to members of EEHAS and SAS; to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and 12 Councillors from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council; and also to the local

MP, Chris Grayling, Shadow Transport Spokesman. Articles appeared in local newspapers and a 'live' interview was recorded with Three Counties Radio. Furthermore, members of the Epsom Cine & Video Society were ever-present on site and we look forward to a screening of their footage in the not too distant future.

#### Acknowledgements

It remains to thank the very many institutions and individuals who made the work possible. It was a genuine team effort. The evaluation derived great support from: The National Trust; Birkbeck, Faculty of Continuing Education; Surrey County Archaeological Unit; Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society; Surrey Archaeological Society; Council for British Archaeology (South East); Bourne Hall Museum; The Museum of London; Surrey County Council; James Simister (Chessington Adult Education Service); and Martin and Alan Wright (PGSD Ltd).

The site was co-directed by the writers; the training excavation trenches were supervised by Mick Miles (Birkbeck) and Becky Lambert (SCAU); the weekend trenches were supervised by Alan Hall, Richard Savage and Phil Stanley (SAS Roman Studies Group); finds supervision was provided by Phil Jones (SCAU), assisted by Frank Pemberton (EEHAS); on-site wet-sieving was coordinated by Geraldine Missig (Birkbeck Environmental Archaeology Group); metal detecting duties were in the capable hands of Bill Meads and John Coles; site tours and handling sessions for schools and members of the public were provided by David Brooks (Bourne Hall Museum) and Abby Guinness (SCAU); and the site plan (see above) was prepared by Giles Pattison (SCAU). Finally, special thanks are due to Caroline Thackray and David Kennington (National Trust) for their unflappable assistance regarding permissions and access; to Robin Densem and Natalie Ping (Birkbeck) for their smooth handling of the site logistics and to Peggy Bedwell and Margaret Nobbs, assisted by other EEHAS members, for services 'above and beyond the call of duty'.

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## COUNCIL NEWS

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### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Reigate Priory School on Saturday 25th November 2006 at 2.30pm. Following the meeting Mr John McNally will describe the interesting results of his research into the Priory Mural – who painted it and when.

### NEW MEMBERS

*Susan Janaway*

A special welcome to the following new members. I have again included principal interests, where they have been given on the membership application form. I hope this will be useful for the Society's Local Secretaries and Committee Chairmen.

Name	Address	Principal Interests
Ashtead Common Estate Office	Bob Warnock Woodfield Road Ashtead, Surrey	
Budgen, Ms M	Flat 17, 111 Church Road Richmond, TW10 6LS	undertaking part-time BA History & Archaeology at Birkbeck. Roman to Saxon Britain
Denis, Christopher	12 Charman Road Redhill, RH1 6AG	Ancient Farming/Field Systems – Iron Age periods
Fancourt, Dave	1 Wood Lane Caterham, CR3 5RT	Local History East Surrey; Dark Age/Viking History and Archaeology
Flatman, Dr Joseph	Institute of Archaeology University College London 31-34 Gordon Square London WC1H 0PY	general

# **HATCHFURLONG, EWELL**

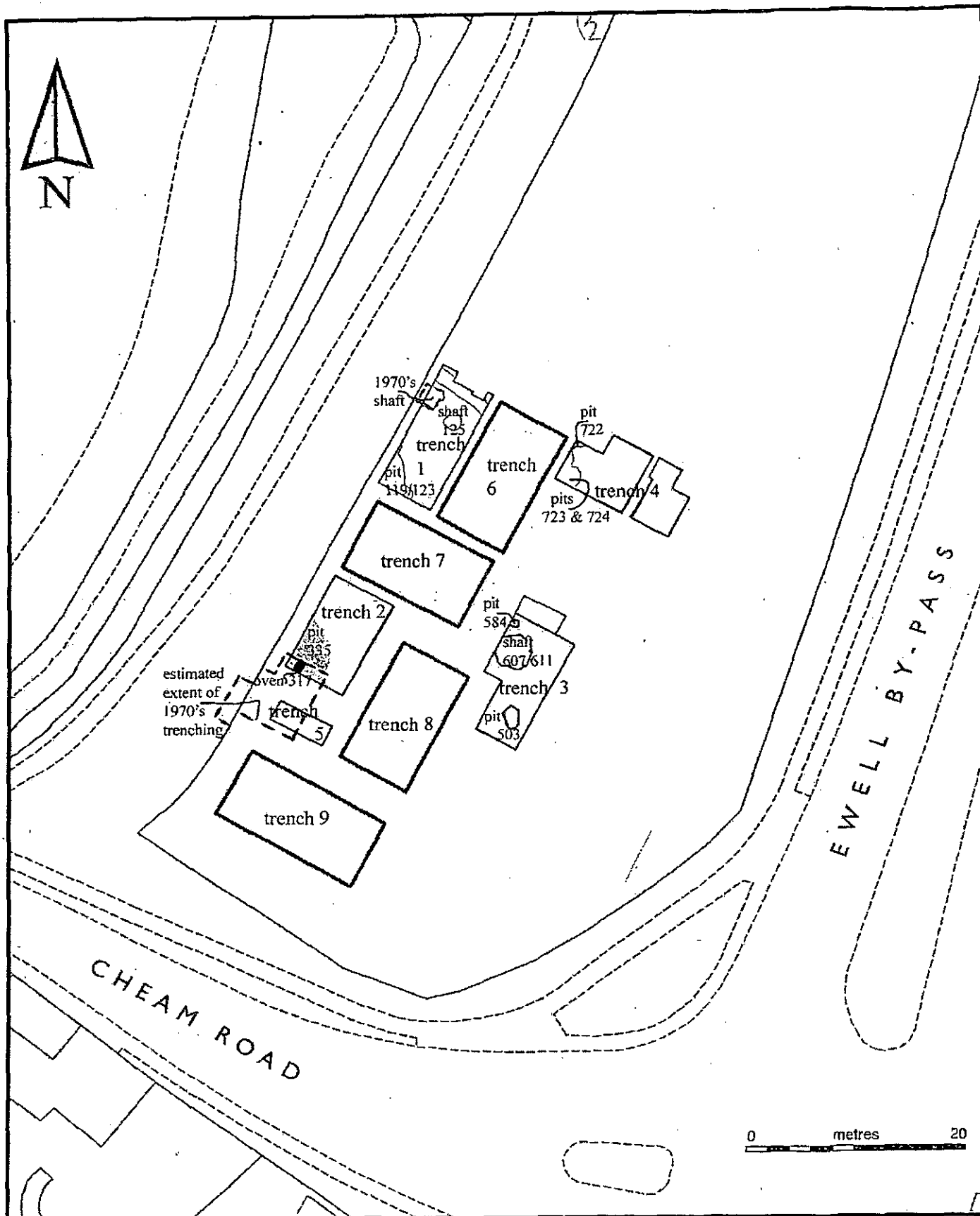
## **Community and Student Training Excavation**

Roman discoveries made in Ewell in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the 1970s are being re-assessed in a training excavation by a team of archaeologists led by Harvey Sheldon of Birkbeck College, University of London and Jon Cotton of the Epsom & Ewell Local History and Archaeology Society/Museum of London. The project partners are Birkbeck Faculty of Continuing Education; Surrey County Archaeological Unit; Heritage Conservation, Surrey County Council; and the Epsom and Ewell History and Archaeology Society.

The dig will be carried out at Hatch Furlong, Ewell between April 21<sup>st</sup> and May 6<sup>th</sup> with archaeology students led by tutors from Birkbeck and the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, and at weekends by local volunteers. This is the second season that the work has been carried out on this site. In 2006 the work focussed on an area where traces of Roman activity were located in 1977 and 1978, which included finds of pottery, glass and coins, together with traces of a stone building and a 14 foot deep chalk shaft. In 2006 the site proved to have been honeycombed with shallow inter-cutting Roman pits or quarries (Trenches 1, 2 & 4); that in Trench 2 contained a small oven or drier with a rectangular flue. In addition, there were at least three substantial chalk-cut shafts (Trenches 1 & 3). Furthermore, it is possible that the two shafts in Trench 1 were screened off from other activity by a linear ditch. These various features probably encompassed a range of utilitarian and non-utilitarian functions.

The quantity of ceramic building material recovered from several of the features in Trenches 3 and 4 hints at the existence of a building somewhere in the vicinity, though no certain traces were identified during the current work. It seems that there were two main phases of Roman activity, dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries and late 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. This appears to be somewhat later than the 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century date of a series of other chalk-cut Roman shafts discovered in the course of the nineteenth century chalk quarrying further south. These various discoveries hint at the existence of a religious complex on the higher ground overlooking Stane Street – the Roman main road from London to Chichester - and the Roman settlement of Ewell.

The main aim of the excavations in 2007 will be to try and establish more clearly the extent, date and character of Roman occupation in this area, and whether there is evidence for significant activity at earlier and later dates.



Plan showing the trenches opened in 2006 (nos 1-5) and those being worked on in in 2007 (nos 6-9)