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SUMMARY

During December 1998 and January 1999, Canterbury Archaeological Trust Ltd undertook detailed archaeological investigations on land situated to the south of the church of St John the Baptist, Mersham, Kent. This work was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited and formed part of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation carried out in advance of the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL). The site's principal interest lies in the evidence it has provided for late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval ironworking.

This assessment report was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited to the specification for such documents produced by Rail Link Engineering, as discussed with English Heritage and Kent County Council. The stratigraphic, artefactual, and environmental records produced by the excavation, and associated documentary sources, were examined to assess their potential in regard to the Landscape Zone Priorities and Fieldwork Event Aims set out in the CTRL research strategy.

The excavation recovered small quantities of mid Anglo-Saxon and earlier material but these were thought to be entirely residual. A few features, one filled largely with slag from iron smelting, were attributed to the late Anglo-Saxon period (*c.* 850-1050) and similarly dated residual material was found in several later features. Pits backfilled with iron slag, a very large oval pit (possibly for water storage) and ditches cut to bring water to the site probably dated to *c.* 1050-1125, although activity may have continued on to *c.* 1200. Boundary ditches were identified on the eastern, western and southern sides of the site: the last of these was found to continue into the modern field immediately to the east of the excavation.

After to the site's general abandonment, the southern boundary ditch was retained while a smaller, parallel, ditch was added to the north. A low level of activity on the site appears to have begun around 1475-1500 but had ended by about 1775. Horticultural features excavated at the eastern end of the site were probably part of this later phase.

This assessment concludes that material relating to the late Anglo-Saxon (Phase 3.1) and early medieval (Phase 3.2) periods is considered worthy of further examination and that studies of the relevant stratigraphic evidence, ferrous residues, iron objects, Anglo-Saxon and early medieval ceramics, implements used in textile manufacture, animal bone, charred plant remains, marine mollusca and documentary records should be undertaken as, in combination, they have the potential to advance our understanding of both the site and the surrounding landscape.