

# Archaeological Evaluation off Honeywood Parkway, Whitfield: Interim Report

## 1. Introduction

**1.1** In connection with plans for further building work on the southern side of Honeywood Parkway on the White Cliffs Business Park at Whitfield (NGR 631291 144243, centred), the Canterbury Archaeological Trust was engaged to undertake evaluation trenching.

**1.2** The excavations were conducted between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010, mostly in dull, wet weather, with melting snow on the ground. The open trenches were inspected by Mr Ben Found from K.C.C.'s Heritage Conservation Group on two separate occasions (15<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> January).

**1.3** A total of 45 trenches was dug under close archaeological control using an 18 tonne tracked excavator, with a 360 degree slew. The work revealed a number of features and finds of archaeological interest and indicated the presence of both prehistoric and Roman remains on the site. The density of these remains, however, was fairly light.

## 2. Results

**2.1** Twelve of the excavated trenches (Trenches 3, 10, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 33, 36, 41, 43 & 45) exposed a total of 22 archaeological features. One of these (pit **F. 135**, Trench 36), on the evidence of the small assemblage of fresh flintwork it yielded, appears to be of prehistoric date, whilst another is certainly post-medieval (pit **F. 130**, Trench 45). A number of features datable to the Roman period were recorded and this includes two second century cremation burials found on the western side of the site (**Fs 145 & 147**, Trench 3). A setting of flint-packed post-holes close-by (**Fs 65, 67, 69, 71, 73 & 75**) may relate to a contemporary timber building. In an adjacent trench (Trench 10) a broad ditch (**F. 84**) produced second century pottery, including decorated samian ware (Dr 37). Two more early Roman pits (**Fs 139 & 141**) were recorded in Trench 21. The remaining features excavated produced no finds and their date must remain uncertain. Some are likely to be Roman but others could be prehistoric.

### 2.2 Roman Occupation

Taken together, the dated features demonstrate that there is early Roman occupation present on the site. Deposits of dark ashy soil containing much broken pottery clearly represent dumped domestic rubbish, derived from dwellings that must have existed in the immediate area. The post-holes recorded in Trench 3 could have formed part of one such simple timber dwelling. The two cremation burials located close by will represent part of the cemetery belonging to this settlement and other burials may exist in adjacent, unexcavated areas.

### 2.3 Prehistoric Activity

Inspection of the field surface allowed the collection of significant quantities of prehistoric flintwork contained within the ploughsoil. Further flint material was recovered during the excavations. Typically, the bulk of the flints appear to be of Neolithic–Bronze Age date (say 2500–1500 BC), with a few pieces that could be Mesolithic (say 8000–4000 BC). Rather more

ancient, however, is a small collection of heavily patinated pieces which belong to the Palaeolithic period (say 500,000–250,000 years BP). These include a typical pointed handaxe of Acheulian type and part of another, broken handaxe, probably an ovate. Similar flint material has been previously found on other sites in the area. As is frequently found to be the case, few sub-surface prehistoric features that could be contemporary with the surface flint scatter were identified, although pit, **F. 135** and one or two of the undated features could be examples of such.

### **3. Conclusions**

**3.1** The investigations conducted on this site have provided clear evidence for activity and occupation here during the prehistoric and Roman periods. The level of ancient occupation does not appear to have been particularly intensive, however and much of the evidence for prehistoric activity is represented by flintwork contained as loose material within the ploughsoil.

**3.2** The evidence for ancient, Palaeolithic activity on the site is of particular interest, although it follows a pattern previously established for the area. The Roman settlement remains provide further evidence for occupation on the high clay-land above Dover – an area which might have been seen as remaining uninhabited until fairly recent times due to the heavy, ill-drained nature of the ground here.

**3.3** Sufficient archaeological evidence has been exposed to warrant some further work on the site. Any additional Roman burials present ought to be removed before development takes place, whilst more details concerning the nature of the Roman settlement generally, would be of considerable interest.

**3.4** The opportunity to collect more prehistoric flint material, particularly Palaeolithic pieces, would further advance our understanding of ancient activity on the high ground above the Dour valley. Associated sub-surface features relating to the prehistoric activity could help characterise something of general nature of habitation in the area, although the Palaeolithic finds are most unlikely to be associated with any sort of structural remains.

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