

# **New Boundary Fence to the south of Richborough Roman Fort – Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Network Rail**

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**August 2016**

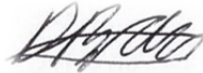
## ECUS Ltd

Report to: **Network Rail**

Report Title: **New Boundary Fence to the south of Richborough Roman Fort  
– Archaeological Watching Brief**

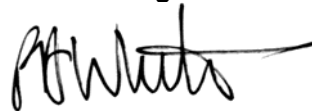
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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 ECUS Ltd were commissioned by Network Rail to undertake an archaeological watching brief to the south of the scheduled area Richborough Roman Fort and amphitheatre, Sandwich, Kent, CT13 9JW (hereafter 'the site') situated between National Grid Co-ordinates 632302 159891 and 632567 160241 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 A new boundary fence was to be constructed parallel to the railway line and outside of the Scheduled Monument. As a duty of care and best practice, it was agreed in co-operation with the landowner (English Heritage) that a watching brief should be maintained during the excavation of postholes for the new fence.
- 1.1.3 The work was conducted and undertaken in accordance with the ClfA's Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching brief (2014). The site work was undertaken by Daniel Bray and Paul White on 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

### 1.2 Location, Topography, Geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located to the south of Richborough Roman Fort close to the mouth of the River Stour approximately 2.4 km north of Sandwich. The site is located down slope of the fort close to the railway line in an area of dense vegetation. The fort on the higher ground lies at a height of 5 m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) which falls down towards the railway line and the river to 3 m AOD. The bedrock geology is mapped as Thanet Formation comprising sand silt and clay. At the foot of the slope this is overlain by clay and silt Tidal Flat Deposits (BGS, 2016).

### 1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.1 The site of the new fence lies close to Richborough Roman Fort (Scheduled Monument, NHLE: 1014642). During the Roman Period Richborough was known as *Rutupiae* which means a stronghold called *repta* (Mills, 2011).
- 1.3.2 The promontory on which the fort is situated once formed a small island near the south-eastern end of the Wantsum Channel and lay next to a natural harbour only 45 km from mainland Europe. The promontory was occupied by a small farmstead in the early Iron Age and may have been surrounded by a defensive palisade. It is widely accepted that Richborough is the landing site of the Claudian Invasion in AD43. A temporary camp was constructed on the island surrounded by a double ditch which enclosed an area of c.4.45ha. At the same time the main Roman Road known as Watling Street was constructed. The road leaves the fort at the western gate and goes to Canterbury and onto London. This temporary camp was replaced by a military and naval supply base which extended outside of the former defensive ditches. These remains are still visible as crop marks to the west, north and south.
- 1.3.3 Within the centre of the fort is a cross shaped rubble footings which are all

that remains of a large superstructure thought to be a four way arch above a cross passageway on a raised plinth designed to celebrate the conquest of Britain. The structure was constructed between AD85 – 90 of ashlar masonry and faced with white Carrara marble and decorated with gilded bronze. Between AD90 and 250 the military camp developed into a town. Following fires the wooden buildings were replaced by stone buildings and following later increased political and military tensions, a square defensive rampart with rounded corners were constructed. In AD270 this was levelled and the rectangular Saxon Shore Fort seen today was constructed.

- 1.3.4 The fort continued in use till the late fifth or early sixth century. A later chapel was built during the Saxon period probably during the seventh century. The chapel was substantially rebuilt during the Norman period and remained in use until the seventh century.
- 1.3.5 Despite damage caused by river erosion the remains of the Saxon shore fort and the early remains have survived well and show a continuity in use of the promontory from the Iron Age through to the medieval period

## 1.4 Objectives and Methodology

- 1.4.1 The purpose of the watching brief was to monitor the excavation of postholes for the new boundary fence and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks which in this instance involved the hand digging of postholes. All spoil removed was inspected for finds.

## 2. Results

- 2.1.1 Along the line of the new fence (**Figure 2**) over 100 postholes were monitored and spoil checked for finds. Postholes were spaced at approximately 3 m intervals and excavated by hand with a scissor fencing shovel. Postholes were circular and averaged 0.30 m in diameter, except for supporting posts which were oval in plan, and all were between 0.50 m and 0.80 m in depth. Due to the narrowness of the postholes and the depth it was not possible to see any archaeological features and it is likely that postholes were excavated into colluvium/hill wash which has accumulated downslope from the promontory above or deposited during construction works associated with the railway line in the late nineteenth century. It was established as part of the watching brief that the northern end of the fence line was erected into construction upcast and ballast associated with the railway line and did not impact upon any archaeological remains.
- 2.1.2 Finds were recovered from 15 postholes, from the southern end of the fence line, which are described in further detail in Appendix 1 and finds detailed in Appendix 2. Posthole numbering starts at 100 at the southern corner and descends numerically further northeast along the line of the fence.

## 3. Finds

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered during a watching brief for a new fence line; finds were recovered from a number of the postholes, but can be regarded as unstratified.

3.1.2 Finds range in date from Romano-British to post-medieval, with one possible prehistoric item. Pottery and ceramic building material (CBM) were the most commonly occurring material types. All finds have been quantified (number and weight) by posthole number, and the results are given in Appendix 2.

### **3.2 Pottery**

3.2.1 Eleven sherds were recovered, all of Romano-British date. Identifiable ware types include samian (three sherds) and Dressel 20 amphora (two sherds). The samian is all of South Gaulish origin, and includes two diagnostic sherds, one from a form 18 platter (PH 65), and one from a Ritt 12 flanged bowl (PH 93). South Gaulish samian was imported up to c. AD 110, and these forms can be dated to the mid/late 1st century. The Dressel 20 amphora has a date range of 1st to 3rd centuries AD, but both these sherds are in the early variant of the fabric (Tomber and Dore 1998, 84, BAT AM 1)

3.2.2 Other wares present include coarse greyware (one body sherd from PH 44) and white-slipped oxidised ware (five conjoining sherds from a small mortarium from PH 62). The latter vessel, featuring a slightly hooked flange and very sparse flint trituration grits, is likely to be a late Romano-British vessel (3rd or 4th century AD) on the grounds of its small size; its source is unknown.

### **3.3 Ceramic Building Material (CBM)**

3.3.1 Eighteen fragments of CBM were recovered. Many of these are undiagnostic, but six can be identified as Romano-British, on a combination of fabric and thickness. There is one tegula roof tile (PH 87), one brick (unknown type, PH 61), and four featureless flat fragments from tiles of unknown type (PHs 51, 59, unstratified 4th PH). Most of the undiagnostic fragments are probably also of Romano-British date, although one fragment from PH 55 is more likely to be post-medieval on fabric grounds.

3.3.2 One fragment of medieval roof tile was also identified (PH 74).

### **3.4 Other Finds**

3.4.1 Other finds comprise a few pieces of animal bone (sheep), marine shell (oyster), stone (limestone, one unworked and one with possibly worked curved surface), worked flint (waste flake, in fresh condition), ironworking slag, and metalwork (dry cell battery, early 20th century). Apart from the battery, none of these finds are datable. The waste flint flake could be prehistoric, but an origin in the manufacture of walling flint cannot be entirely ruled out.

### **3.5 Potential and recommendations**

3.5.1 This is a very small finds assemblage and its potential is extremely limited. As would be anticipated the Romano-British pottery and CBM attests to activity of this period in the vicinity of the site, and the range of ware types is not unexpected, but there is little further information that can be gleaned.

3.5.2 The same is true of other material types recovered, whose potential is restricted by the very small quantities recovered, and the absence of items of intrinsic interest. Further analysis is not warranted, and nor is retention of

these finds for long-term curation. It is proposed that the finds are returned to the landowners (Historic England).

## **4. Conclusion**

4.1.1 Monitoring of postholes during the construction of a new boundary fence revealed no features of archaeological interests but returned a small assemblage of finds from a total of 15 postholes. The small assemblage of finds which include pottery, CBM, flint and bone which were recovered during the archaeological monitoring were unstratified and not recovered from sealed archaeological contexts.

## **5. Storage and Curation**

### **5.1 Archive**

- 5.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared and arrangements for the deposition of the Archive on completion of the project will be made in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage* (UKIC 1990).
- 5.1.2 The archive is currently held at ECUS Ltd, Eastlands II, London Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 4AW with site code 8036/RRF16 and will be deposited with the landowner in due course.
- 5.1.3 An OASIS form (Oasis ID – ecusltd1 – 265962 has been initiated and a copy is provided in Appendix 3 of this report.

## 6. References

### 6.1 Bibliography

British Geological Survey 2016 *British Geology Viewer*. Available at [mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html](http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html) [accessed 8/08/2016]

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 2014. Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

NPPF 2012, National Planning Policy Framework, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)

*Tomber, R and Dore, J, 1998 The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: a handbook, Museum of London Archaeology Service, Monogr 2*



## Appendix 1: Description of Postholes with finds

Posthole	Diameter (m)	Depth (m)	Description
26	0.3	0.7	0-0.30 mid brown grey silty sand topsoil with frequent ; 0.30m+ mid yellow brown clay sand
40	0.30	0.70	0-0.30 mid brown grey silty sand topsoil; 0.30m+ mid yellow brown clay sand
41	0.30	0.70	0-0.30 mid brown grey silty sand topsoil; 0.30m+ mid yellow brown clay sand
44	0.30	0.55	0-0.55m+ mid brown grey clay sand topsoil
51	0.30	0.55	0-0.55m+ mid brown grey clay sand topsoil
55	0.30	0.75	0-0.20m dark grey silty sand topsoil; 0.20m+ mid brown grey silty sand
59	0.30 – 0.40	0.55	0-0.55m+ mid brown grey sandy silt topsoil
61	0.35 – 0.40	0.65	0-0.20m dark grey brown silty sand; 0.20m+ mid grey brown silty sand
62	0.45 – 0.30	0.60	0-0.15m dark grey brown silty sand topsoil; 0.15m+ mid grey brown silty sand
65	0.60 – 0.30	0.65	0-0.65m+ mid grey brown silty sand
67	0.30	0.80	0-0.15m dark grey brown silty sand topsoil; 0.15m- 0.70m mid grey brown silty sand; 0.70m + orange brown clay sand
69	0.30	0.70	0-0.70m+ mid brown grey silty sand
74	0.30	0.70	0-0.70m+ mid brown grey silty sand
87	0.30	0.60	0-0.40m mid brown grey silty sand; 0.40m+ light brown yellow sand
93	0.30	0.65	0-0.45m mid brown grey silty sand; 0.45m+ light brown yellow and pale grey sand.

## Appendix 2: Finds by context

Context – number descending from 100 from southern end of fence	Find Type	Number	Weight (g)	Comments
PH 26	Bone	1	4	sheep 1st phalanx
PH 26	shell	1	3	oyster (fragment)
PH 26	Slag	1	16	ironworking
PH 26	stone	1	34	limestone, possibly part of curved surface - object??
PH 26	pot	1	5	RB: Dressel 20 amphora
PH 26	CBM	7	48	6 undiagnostic (could be RB); 1 RB: flat featureless (th 22mm)
PH 40	Pot	1	3	RB: SG samian (body sherd)
PH 41	Bone	1	28	sheep tibia
PH 41	CBM	1	7	undiagnostic, possibly RB
PH 44	metal	1	36	dry cell battery
PH 44	Pot	1	3	RB: greyware
PH 51	CBM	2	60	RB: 1 flat featureless (th 21mm), 1 undiagnostic
PH 55	CBM	1	8	undiagnostic, probably post-medieval
PH 59	CBM	4	86	RB: 2 flat featureless (th 20-2), 2 undiagnostic
PH 59	shell	1	11	oyster (RD valve) heavily abraded
PH 61	CBM	1	90	RB: brick (th 32mm)
PH 62	Pot	5	49	RB: oxidised, white-slipped, small mortarium (conjoining sherds); sparse flint trituration grits
PH 65	pot	1	5	RB: SG samian (Dr 18 rim sherd)
PH 65	shell	3	7	oyster (frags)
PH 65	stone	1	505	limestone; no obvious signs of working
PH 67	pot	1	58	RB: Dressel 20 amphora
PH 69	flint	1	7	waste flake
PH 74	CBM	1	21	medieval roof tile

## Appendix 3: Oasis Form

OASIS ID: ecusltd1-265962

Project details

Project name New Boundary Fence to the south of Richborough Roman Fort

Short description of the project ECUS Ltd were commissioned by Network Rail to undertake an archaeological watching brief to the south of the scheduled area Richborough Roman Fort and amphitheatre, Sandwich, Kent, CT13 9JW situated between National Grid Co-ordinates 632302 159891 and 632567 160241. A new boundary fence was to be constructed parallel to the railway line and outside of the Scheduled Monument. As a duty of care and best practice, it was agreed in co-operation with the landowner (English Heritage) that a watching brief should be maintained during the excavation of postholes for the new fence. The site work was undertaken by Daniel Bray and Paul White on 9th and 16th May 2016. Along the line of the new fence (Figure 2) over 100 postholes were monitored and spoil checked for finds. Postholes were spaced at approximately 3 m intervals and excavated by hand with a scissor fencing shovel. Postholes were circular and averaged 0.30 m in diameter, except for supporting posts which were oval in plan, and all were between 0.50 m and 0.80 m in depth. Monitoring of postholes during the construction of a new boundary fence revealed no features of archaeological interests but returned a small assemblage of finds from a total of 15 postholes. The small assemblage of finds which include pottery, CBM, flint and bone which were recovered during the archaeological monitoring were unstratified and not recovered from sealed archaeological contexts.

Project dates Start: 09-05-2016 End: 16-05-2016

Previous/future work No / No

Type of project Recording project

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds POTTERY Roman

Significant Finds BONE Roman

Significant Finds CBM Roman

Significant Finds CBM Medieval

Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Voluntary/self-interest

Project location

Country England

Site location KENT DOVER ASH Richborough Roman Fort

Postcode CT13 9JW

Study area 0 Square metres

Site coordinates 632302 159891 632302 00 00 N 159891 00 00 E Point

Site coordinates 632567 160241 632567 00 00 N 160241 00 00 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation ECUS Ltd

Project brief originator Consultant

Project design originator ECUS Ltd

Project director/manager Paul White

Project supervisor Daniel Bray

Project supervisor Paul White

Type of sponsor/funding body Network Rail

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient English Heritage

Physical Contents "Animal Bones", "Ceramics", "Metal", "Worked stone/lithics"

Digital Archive recipient English Heritage

Digital Contents "none"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient English Heritage

Paper Contents "none"

Paper Media available "Correspondence", "Report"

Entered by Daniel Bray (daniel.bray@ecusltd.co.uk)

Entered on 19 October 2016

## Plates



**Plate 1:** General shot looking southwest along the line of new fence



**Plate 2:** Posthole 61. Scale 1 m and 0.20 m

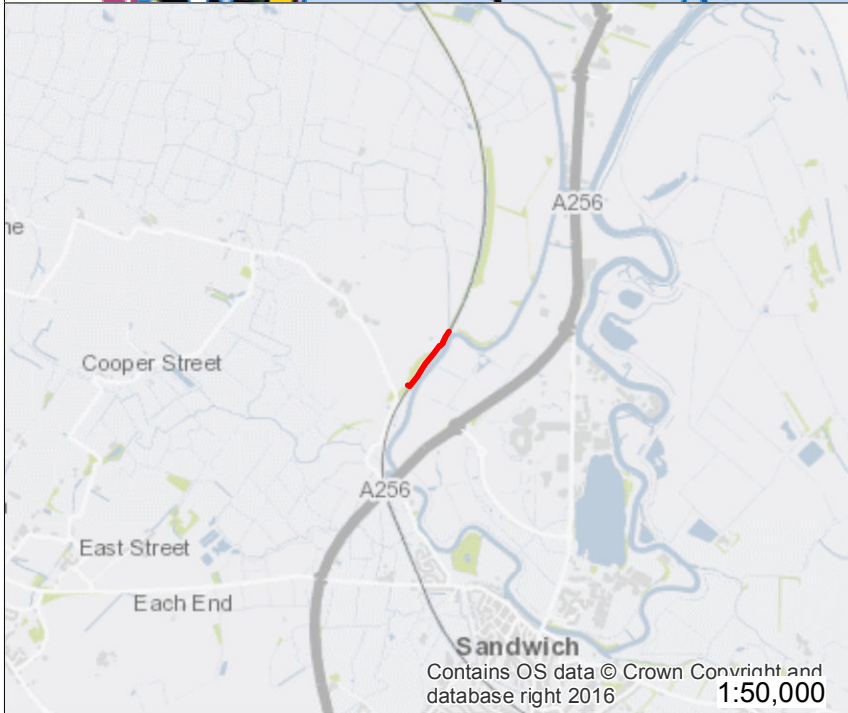
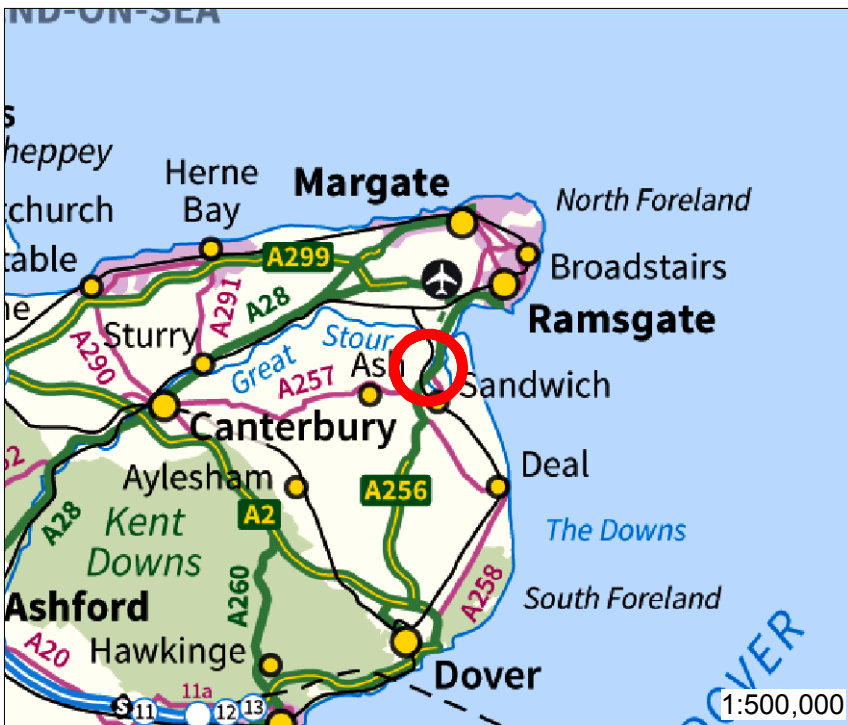


**Plate 3:** General shot of postholes 65 - 67 looking southwest. Scales 2 m and 0.2 m



**Plate 4:** Posthole 90

## **Illustrations**



— Fence Line



**Network Rail**

New Boundary Fence to the South of Richborough Roman Fort - Archaeological Watching Brief

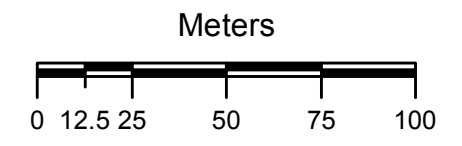
**Figure 1: Site Location**

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- Fence Line
- Scheduled Monument



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New Boundary Fence to the south of  
Richborough Roman Fort -  
Archaeological Watching Brief

**Figure 2**  
Line of new fence

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