

**Channel Tunnel Rail Link
Union Railways (South) Ltd**

Project Area 430

**SOUTH OF BEECHBROOK WOOD
ARC BWD 98**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
INTERIM REPORT**

Contract S/400/0008 P483

MUSEUM OF LONDON

Museum of London Archaeology Service

September 1999

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INTERIM REPORT**

Prepared by:
Date:
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Approved by:
Position:
Date:

Contract S/400/0008 P483

**Museum of London Archaeology Service
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September 1999

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to undertake archaeological investigations at South of Beechbrook Wood (ARC BWD 98), to the north of the A20, west of Ashford, Kent, in 1998 (Figure 1). This work formed part of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation carried out in advance of the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL).
 - 1.2 The site comprised one area laid out across the line of the proposed CTRL on the crown and north side of a slight knoll. The archaeological area measured 1.87 hectares. The excavation area was centred on URS grid point 78400 25300, corresponding approximately to Ordnance Survey national grid reference (NGR) TQ 9850 4540.
 - 1.3 The method of investigation was specified as ‘strip, map and sample’. This method entailed machine stripping of topsoil and other deposits to expose the archaeological horizon followed by the construction of a plan of the exposed area, then sufficient hand excavation, recording and sampling of all features to fulfil the project aims. This methodology was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (URL 1998), detailing the scope and methods of excavation and was agreed with English Heritage and the local authority. The fieldwork took place in September 1998.
- Background*
- 1.4 The geology of the area consists of Sandgate Beds covered with a drift deposit of yellow brown sands and silts. The site lies in a low-lying, undulating landscape and specifically overlies the crown of a low knoll and a north-facing slope.
 - 1.5 A preliminary desk-top assessment conducted for URL (URL 1994) identified the site as having possible archaeological interest as a number of cropmarks were identified. The desk-top assessment identified the area around the site has having evidence for prehistoric and Roman occupation, medieval and post-medieval farming and villages.
 - 1.6 An archaeological evaluation was carried out on this site (URL 1997, South of Beechbrook Wood) where features dating from 1st century to 3rd century AD were recorded. A further evaluation (URL 1998, Beechbrook Wood: where further field ditches and firepits were recorded) was conducted in neighbouring fields prior to the excavation South of Beechbrook Wood.

2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

2.1 Periods Represented

- 2.1.1 Provisional dating evidence suggests that the following periods were represented in the archaeological data (Figure 2).

Possible Middle Bronze Age (1500 - 1000 BC)

- 2.1.2 A single vessel, possibly originally containing a cremation was recorded, set into a cut. It is possible that this vessel may be a Middle Bronze Age Deverel-Rimbury urn.

Late Iron Age - early Roman (100 BC - AD 100)

- 2.1.3 Most of the features recorded on site appear to belong to this period. The site was heavily plough damaged and only the base of features survived. It is possible that later Roman activity was represented on the site and has yet to be recognised.

Post-medieval (1500 - present)

- 2.1.4 The site was crossed by a number of stone-lined field drains.

2.2 Feature Types

Cremations

- 2.2.1 Two cremations were recovered from the site. The pottery vessels associated with these cremations have not been assessed and the dates are uncertain. The upper parts of the cremations and the pottery vessels had been disturbed by plough action.

Firepits

- 2.2.2 Numerous pits with reddened bases and charcoal rich fills were identified, associated with a possible settlement focus at the top of the hill, on the eastern side of the site.

Postholes and a possible beam slot

- 2.2.3 A concentration of postholes appears to indicate a settlement focus on the eastern side of the site. Two probable 'four post structures' were recorded and a possible circular hut was identified. Two postholes appear to have been associated with a narrow linear cut which has been provisionally interpreted as a beam slot.

Pits

- 2.2.4 A number of medium sized pits were recorded. Some pits had very clean fills, others contained pottery and charcoal.

Enclosure ditches/field system

- 2.2.5 The site is characterised by numerous ditches, mostly aligned north-west to south-east but occasionally orientated east to west or curving. It seems clear that not all ditches were open simultaneously (a possible Late Iron Age/early Roman cremation was recovered from one ditch fill) and it is possible that the field system is Bronze Age in origin (evidence from a possible Deverel-Rimbury urn).

Field drains

- 2.2.6 All archaeological features had been truncated by ploughing and post-medieval agriculture is represented by numerous stone-built field drains. Interestingly these drains are on the same alignments as the earlier field ditches. No ceramic field drains were located.

2.3 Artefactual Remains***Pottery****Possible Middle Bronze Age*

- 2.3.1 The prehistoric pottery scanned consisted of coarse, ill-sorted flint-tempered sherds. A single context group examined had relatively thick walls (although only sherds from the base and lower part of the body are present, which have a tendency to be the thickest part of vessels). The sherds are possibly all from one vessel, and the absence of shoulder or rim sherds may suggest the vessel was truncated or disturbed from its original deposit. Although there are no feature sherds with diagnostic characteristics, the fabric and thickness of the wall suggests these sherds probably derive from a Middle Bronze Age Deverel-Rimbury urn. These vessels were commonly used for cremations.

Late Iron Age - Early Roman:

- 2.3.2 Only one assemblage of this date has been fully processed and examined. This assemblage was excavated from the backfill of a ditch and the condition and size of the sherds would suggest the vessels were deposited as part of domestic rubbish disposal from a nearby settlement. The sherds are large and some are joining; the preliminary scan identified a minimum of 14 vessels present.
- 2.3.3 The presence of cremation burials inside vessels also indicates nearby settlement activity. These vessels have not been seen.
- 2.3.4 On the basis of our current understanding, the majority of the pottery appears to closely relate to settlement activity of Late Iron Age - early Roman date.

Registered finds

- 2.3.5 A number of iron objects were recovered. These have no obvious form or function but further work may reveal specific uses.
- 2.3.6 If the remainder of the as yet unseen assemblage is of comparable good condition and quantity, then the pottery from this site has the potential to provide reasonable dating information and contribute to the interpretation of the site in terms of the nature and organisation of the settlement. In west Kent settlements of this date have been excavated and published and will provide important comparative data.

2.4 Palaeo-environmental and Economic Evidence

- 2.4.1 Ten litres of four selected samples were processed by flotation during the excavation. The residues were sorted for both environmental and artefactual evidence and the flots scanned dry using a binocular microscope.
- 2.4.2 The biological remains in the samples appear to be largely restricted to charred plant remains with the material from several samples being able to provide information on the range of crops used (emmer/spelt wheat *Triticum dicoccum/spelta*, wheat, barley and oats) at the site and possibly more detailed information on crop husbandry practices. The species

identification of some of the larger charcoal fragments may yield evidence on the range of woods used as fuel at the time.

3 FIELDWORK EVENT AIMS

- 3.1 Previous desk-based and field works have recorded an area of cropmarks and scatters of cultural material and archaeological features.
- 3.2 The primary excavation aims were:
- Determine the morphology and organisation of the local Roman landscape;
 - Establish a dated sequence for the origin and development of any land divisions, including enclosures and trackways;
 - Establish the absence/presence of any settlement focii and other activities;
 - Establish the association between land divisions and possible settlement focii;
 - Determine the contemporary local environment;
 - Recover samples for palynological analysis from enclosure ditches.
- 3.3 The area of excavation at South of Beechbrook Wood provided a keyhole view to the local archaeological survival, and parts of all the above research questions can probably be answered. Preliminary results from the excavation appear to indicate that, in association with the results of the evaluation at Beechbrook Wood (URL 98 - where numerous field ditches and occasional firepits dated to the Late Iron Age - early Roman period were identified) and the recent watching brief, more detailed conclusions may be drawn.

4 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL

4.1 The site lies within the landscape zone of the 'Wealden Greensand with some Low Weald' (also called the Greensand Vale) and the potential contribution of this site towards answering the CTRL archaeological research aims can be considered under the following headings, taken from the CTRL *Archaeological research strategy* (URL 1998):

- farming communities (2000–100 BC);
- towns and rural landscapes (100 BC–AD 1700);
- recent landscapes (AD 1700–1945).

4.2 The provisional results of the excavation of this site appear provisionally to offer information that can be placed under the broad headings above, but it should be noted that further study may alter these initial conclusions.

4.3 Farming communities (2000 – 100 BC);

4.3.1 The presence of a possible Middle Bronze Age cremation may imply nearby occupation during this period. It is presumed that these people were farmers and it is possible that parts of the field system recorded at South of Beechbrook Wood, and in the surrounding areas, may date from this period.

4.4 Towns and rural landscapes (100 BC – AD 1700);

4.4.1 The majority of features recorded on site appear to date from the Late Iron Age/early Roman period. A series of possible enclosures and field ditches have been recorded, and an area of postholes (including three possible structures), firepits, storage and rubbish pits, indicates a settlement focus located on the eastern edge of the site. Possible postholes and a cremation were recorded cutting earlier backfilled ditches and a number of enclosure ditches contained domestic pottery and food waste.

4.4.2 Later Roman artefacts have been recovered in the immediate area and it is likely that the settlement continued through to the later Roman period. It is possible that much of the evidence for this settlement has been truncated by plough action.

4.4.3 No evidence for Saxon or medieval landuse has yet been identified.

4.5 Recent landscapes (AD 1700–1945).

4.5.1 During the post-medieval period a system of field drainage was imposed on the area of the site. The drains were constructed of unworked but flattish pieces of sandstone laid to form box drains, set in cuts below the level of plough disturbance. The drains were generally set in narrow straight sided cuts but one cut, toward the northern part of the site, was 2.30m wide by 1.00m deep with the drain set into additional slot (0.35m deep by 0.65m wide) in the base.

4.5.2 The metal detector survey appears not to have recovered any artefacts of archaeological significance. The farmer stated that the field had been thoroughly metal detected previously.

4.5.3 Modern intensive agriculture had continued until the construction of the CTRL.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The site supervisor was Steve Chew and this interim report has been prepared by Niall Roycroft. The archaeological plans were digitised by Kate Pollard.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

URL (Union Railways Limited), 1994 *Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects, Final Report, vol. 1 to 4* prepared by the Oxford Archaeology Unit

URL 1997 *South of Beechbrook Wood ARC BWD 97. An Archaeological Evaluation* Prepared by the Museum of London Archaeology Service

URL 1998 *Agreement for the provision of archaeological investigations between Charing Heath and Ashford*

URL 1998 *Beechbrook Wood ARC BBW 98. An Archaeological Evaluation* Prepared by the Museum of London Archaeology Service

APPENDIX 1 - ARCHIVE INDEX

ITEM	NUMBER OF ITEMS	NUMBER OF FRAGMENTS	CONDITION (No. of items) (W=washed; UW=unwashed; M=marked; P=processed; UP=unprocessed; D=digitised; I=indexed)
Contexts records	202		
A1 plans	1		D
A4 plans	10		D
A1 sections			
A4 sections	3		
Small finds (boxes)	1 standard		UW
Films (monochrome) S=slide; PR=print	1PR		
Films (Colour) S=slide; PR=print	1S, 1PR (+ second set)		
Flint (boxes)	1 standard		UW
Pottery (boxes)	8 standard		UW
Fired clay (boxes)			
CBM (boxes)	2 standard		UW
Stone (boxes)			
Metalwork (boxes)			
Glass (boxes)			
Slag (boxes)			
Human Bone (boxes)	1 standard, 1 tub		UW
Animal Bone (boxes)	1 standard		UW
Soil Samples (No.)	11		
Soil Samples (bags/tubs)	60 litres		UP
Soil Samples (Monolith/kubina tin)			

Key to Box Sizes

Standard box: 0.46m x 0.18m x 0.13m
Large box: 0.46m x 0.27m x 0.25m
Tub: 0.31m x 0.31m x 0.16m

APPENDIX 2 - INTERIM SUMMARY REPORT

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to undertake an archaeological excavation at South of Beechbrook Wood (sitecode ARC BWD 98), to the north of the A20, west of Ashford, Kent, in 1998. This work 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 comprised one area laid out across the line of the proposed CTRL on the crown and north side of a slight knoll. The archaeological area measured 1.87 hectares. The trench was at URS grid point 78400 25300, corresponding approximately to Ordnance Survey national grid reference (NGR) TQ 9850 4540.

The geology of the area consists of Sandgate Beds covered with a drift deposit of yellowish brown sands and silts. The site lies in a low-lying, undulating landscape and specifically overlies the crown of a low knoll and a north-facing slope.

A single vessel possibly containing a cremation was recorded set into a cut. It is possible, from the limited specialist input, that this vessel may be a Middle Bronze Age Deverel-Rimbury urn.

Most of the site was covered by a series of (?enclosure) ditches, postholes, firepits, storage and other pits which appear to belong to the Late Iron Age/early Roman period. The site has been badly damaged by plough action and only the bases of features survived. It is possible later Roman activity was represented on the site and has yet to be identified.

The site was crossed by numerous post-medieval stone-lined field drains.

APPENDIX 3: KENT SMR RECORD SHEET

Site Name: South of Beechbrook Wood, Near Ashford, Kent			
Site code: ARC BWD 98			
Summary: An area excavation was undertaken from 1st to 30th September 1998 on a previously evaluated site (evaluation sitecode: ARC BWD 97), commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited.			
District: Ashford		Parish: Hothfield	
Period(s): 1. Possible Bronze Age 2. Late Iron Age - early Roman			
NGR (to west and east extremes):		100 km ref: TQ	
NGR Easting 9850		NGR Northing 4540	
NGR Easting		NGR Northing	
Type of Recording:	Evaluation	Watching-Brief	Field-Walking
(Delete)	Excavation	Geophysical Survey	Measured Survey
Date of Recording: (From) 1 September 1998		(To) 30th September 1998	
Unit Undertaking Recording: Museum of London Archaeology Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB			
Summary of Field Results: Much of the site was covered by a series of (?enclosure) ditches, postholes, firepits, storage and other pits which appear to belong to the Late Iron Age/early Roman period. The presence of a possible Middle Bronze Age cremation is to be confirmed. The site has been badly damaged by plough action and only the bases of features survived. It is possible later Roman activity was represented on the site and is to be identified.			
Location of Archive/Finds:		MoLAS Temporarily	
Bibliography: URL 1994 <i>Channel Tunnel Rail Link, assessment of historic and cultural effects, final report, vol. 1 of 4</i> , Oxford Archaeological Unit, section 5.16.2.2, 112 URL 1998 <i>South of Beechbrook Wood (ARC BWD 97) archaeological evaluation</i> , Museum of London Archaeology Service.			
Summary Compiler: Niall Roycroft			Date: 23rd July 1999