Channel Tunnel Rail Link Union Railways (South) Ltd

Project Area 330

COBHAM GOLF COURSE ARC CGC 98

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION INTERIM REPORT

Contract S/300/0052 P381

MUSEUM OF LONDON

Museum of London Archaeology Service

September 1999

Channel Tunnel Rail Link Union Railways (South) Ltd

Project Area 330

COBHAM GOLF COURSE ARC CGC 98

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION INTERIM REPORT

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

Contract S/300/0052 P381

Museum of London Archaeology Service 87 Queen Victoria Street London EC4V 4AB

September 1999

©Union Railways (South) Limited 1999.

All rights including translation, reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of Union Railways (South) Limited.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to undertake detailed archaeological investigations at Rochester and Cobham Golf Course, Cobham, west of Rochester, 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).
- The site measured roughly 320m west to east by 35m north to south (Figure 2). Its western extremity was at URL grid point 49020 49520, corresponding approximately to Ordnance Survey national grid reference (NGR) TQ 6900 6950, and its eastern extremity was at URS grid point 49350 49500, corresponding to NGR TQ 6930 6928. The area of the site was roughly 10 hectares. The ground sloped gently from the west down to the east.
- 1.3 The method of investigation was specified as 'strip, map and sample'. This 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 was in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing the scope and methods of excavation, prepared by URL and agreed with English Heritage and the local authority. Work was undertaken between August and October 1998.

Background

- 1.4 The natural solid geology of the area consists of the Upper Chalk of the North Downs. The site lies on the dip-slope of the Downs, on the southern side of a dry valley running eastwards to the River Medway. In the area of the site the Upper Chalk is overlaid by Pleistocene drift deposits, generally clay-with-flints, with more recent localised pockets of colluvial silts, a semi-porous fine sandy clay. The archaeological features that were found were all cut into such colluvium.
- 1.5 A preliminary desk-top assessment identified the site as having possible archaeological interest (URL 1994, vol 1, 107–113). The vicinity of the site has yielded evidence for prehistoric and Roman occupation, an Anglo-Saxon cemetery, and medieval farming and villages; the site lies inside the northern edge of Cobham Park, a deer park and designed landscape created in the 17th and 18th centuries, and a registered historic park or garden. The main Roman road between Dover and London, later known by the name of its successor road as Watling Street, ran along the north edge of the site.
- 1.6 The desk-top assessment was supplemented by geophysical prospection (URL 1996, vol 2, plans 2.1 & 2.2). Magnetometer survey identified a small area in the eastern half of the site as causing weak magnetic activity, possibly having archaeological significance. Magnetic susceptibility survey identified several small areas mainly in the eastern half of the site as causing weak enhancement of susceptibility, with possible archaeological significance.
- In 1995 an evaluation of the site was commissioned by Rochester and Cobham Golf Club and undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Nash & Proctor 1997). A total of 16 trenches were opened. One trench, situated near the centre of the site, produced objects dated to the Early Neolithic (a leaf-shaped arrowhead) and the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (much burnt and struck flint, pottery fragments, a spindlewhorl and burnt sandstone). These objects were not found in any obvious features, however, and were probably disturbed by ploughing.
- 1.8 In 1997 a second evaluation was commissioned by URL and undertaken by Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1997. A total of 17 trenches were distributed systematically. Pottery

dated to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages was found, about 90% of it in a single feature, apparently part of a shallow ditch in the eastern half of the site. Similar pottery and burnt and struck flint was found widely scattered elsewhere, all taken to represent 'light domestic occupation of [an] ill-defined nature'.

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.

Middle Bronze Age (1500–1000 BC)

2.1.2 A pit and a ditch contained pottery and burnt and struck flints dated to the Middle Bronze Age.

Late Bronze Age (1000–650 BC)

2.1.3 Several pits, postholes, a ditch and the primary fill of a ring ditch contained burnt and struck flint and pottery identified as Late Bronze Age. One small pit contained a large assemblage of many joining sherds and partially complete vessels.

Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age (1000–500 BC)

2.1.4 Two contexts contained pottery identified as Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age. One of these was the fill of a pit, containing several sherds from a single vessel, including base, rim and body sherds.

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

2.1.5 The later fills of the ring ditch contained grog-tempered sherds of Late Iron Age or possibly early Roman date.

Medieval and post-medieval (AD 1066 to the present)

2.1.6 Horizontal truncation of features older than the medieval period indicates that the site was probably ploughed then. Evidence was obtained for the effects of local anti-aircraft gunnery in the Second World War, and more recently for construction of the existing golf course.

2.2 Feature Types

2.2.1 All the features found were cut into the lower colluvial deposits underlying the subsoil and topsoil. All archaeological features had been truncated horizontally by subsequent disturbance, probably ploughing, at a depth of up to 0.5m below modern ground level. The subsoil contained many fine fragments of dirty chalk, taken to be a residue of marling for cultivation. There were almost no direct stratigraphic relationships between different features.

Ring ditch

2.2.2 On the southern edge of the site, near its eastern extremity, a ditch was found forming a circle 18m to 20m in internal diameter, with a gap about 2m wide in its southern side. This ditch was 1m wide and survived to a depth of 1m, having been truncated horizontally by later ploughing or similar disturbance, suggesting that originally it would have been V-shaped in profile and its relative depth would have been greater. The feature is identified as a ring ditch with a causewayed entrance. Presumably the ditch originally encircled a barrow, or mound, created by the upcast from the ditch and marking a burial (or burials). No traces of any other features were found either inside the ditch or nearby, and no sign survived of any burial or mound. The later fills of the ditch exhibited tip-lines, which indicated that the material had been transported into the ditch from the centre of the ring; perhaps this occurred as the mound was levelled, either by natural erosion or as a result of ploughing.

Presumed field ditches

2.2.3 A straight ditch was traced running west to east for at least 100m, and two other, shorter ditches were traced running north to south. These ditches were very shallow and the west–east ditch survived only in discontinuous stretches and pockets, marked most visibly by the flints and pottery in its fills. Most of the pottery recovered in the 1997 evaluation came from the west–east ditch.

Postholes

2.2.4 Some 35 postholes were excavated by half-sectioning, and the remaining fill was removed if it appeared to contain pottery or flints. Several were lined or packed with flint fragments. None of them in combination with each other could be seen to form any structural pattern in plan, but they were nearly all to the south of the west to east ditch and concentrated in an area about 50m long to the east of the centre of the site.

Possible hearths

2.2.5 Two shallow bowl-shaped features were marked by heavily scorched and fire-reddened clay. They were situated within 3m of each other in the eastern half of the site. No pottery has been identified from these features, and the presence of slag is yet to be determined from samples taken. However their character and stratigraphic position suggests that they could be associated with nearby Bronze Age features, in which case they may have been hearths, perhaps for metalworking. Alternatively they may have been made by charcoal burning.

Miscellaneous pits and uncertain cut features

2.2.6 A few cut features were recorded at the extreme western end of the site that could have been pits, large postholes or lengths of ditch.

Modern features

2.2.7 The site was much disturbed by construction of the existing golf course. Metal and plastic irrigation pipes were inserted into the subsoil running the length of the site between brick junction boxes. In addition large platforms some tens of metres across were mounded up on a base of blue clay to support teeing-off greens, and areas up to 10m across were dug and filled with relatively pure sand to act as bunkers.

2.3 Artefactual Remains

Prehistoric pottery

- 2.3.1 Two contexts, one a pit in the centre of the site and the other a portion of the long west–east ditch, contained sherds in the Deverel-Rimbury tradition, of Middle Bronze Age date. Several sherds were decorated with the finger tips, or had applied decoration, and were derived from a Deverel-Rimbury urn. The fabric and thickness of other body sherds would suggest that they are of similar type and date.
- 2.3.2 Eleven contexts contained pottery identified as being Late Bronze Age. They comprise a number of forms typical of the post-Deverel-Rimbury tradition, dating from the end of the 2nd millennium to the 9th–8th centuries BC. Several fragments of perforated clay slabs were recovered, which are common finds on Late Bronze Age domestic sites. A fragment of a clay loomweight also suggests that the site had a domestic aspect, but this could relate to either the Middle or the Late Bronze Age.

Flint

2.3.3 A total of 186 pieces of struck flint were recovered, together with much burnt, unworked flint. Most of the flint seems to represent the result of opportunistic reduction of nodules,

typical of later prehistoric flint working. No individual pieces were identified as evidently Neolithic, like that found in the evaluation.

Other artefacts

2.3.4 Numerous brass cartridge cases and fragments of shrapnel were found in the course of initial metal detecting and soil stripping of the site, together with large horseshoes, golfballs, studs and a fragment of a plough coulter.

2.4 Palaeo-Environmental and Economic Evidence

- 2.4.1 The soil conditions on the site suggest that preservation of plant remains is likely to be limited to charred material, potentially cereal grains, chaff and weeds, which might provide information on economic activities, for example, crop husbandry. Environmental bulk soil samples were taken from most of the cut features (see Appendix 2: Archive Index), although scanning in the course of the excavation appeared to indicate that the preservation of botanical material was poor.
- 2.4.2 Soil conditions did not appear to allow animal or other bone to be preserved.

3 FIELDWORK EVENT AIMS

- 3.1 The remains found in the evaluations suggested 'the presence of a small, Middle–Late Bronze Age settlement, of a type whose nature is at present poorly understood in Kent. Comparable sites are more common in Sussex, e.g Black Patch, Patcham Fawcett, Varley Halls, Itford Hill' (URL 1998, 42–3). In the event the provisional results of the excavation seem to confirm this view.
- 3.2 The primary excavation aims were:
 - to determine the morphology and function of the settlement, including any adjacent enclosures and trackways etc;
 - to recover Bronze Age pottery assemblages, supported by radio-carbon dates, for assessment and analysis;
 - to recover evidence for on site metal working;
 - to recover environmental, and other economic indicators if these are found to be present on site;
 - to relate the remains to the evolution of the A2 corridor.
- 3.3 Preliminary results from the excavation appear to be able to answer these research questions. In addition the excavation substantiated the existing evidence for a settlement in the Middle to Late Bronze Age by providing further possible evidence for:
 - structures
 - cooking and food storage
 - field ditches
 - burials (or equivalent ritual acts and associated structures)
 - spinning and weaving metalworking (or alternatively charcoal-burning).
- 3.4 Soil conditions were not conducive to the preservation of environmental remains. Very few charred remains were found on site and no samples were considered worthy of radio-carbon dating.

4 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL

- 4.1 The site lies in the 'landscape zone' of the North Downs (also called 'the A2 corridor'). The potential contribution of this site towards answering the research aims of the archaeological component of the CTRL can be considered under the following headings, taken from the CTRL *Archaeological Research Strategy*:
 - 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 appear 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 These potential contributions are sometimes posed here in the form of specific questions, of a kind that post-excavation assessment of the data may be able to answer, or at least confirm are answerable.

4.4 Farming communities (2000–100 BC)

- 4.4.1 There was a relatively long-lived settlement here, lasting from the Middle Bronze Age to perhaps the Early Iron Age. The existence of a long-lived prehistoric settlement here indicates that the area was clearly favourable to settlement, perhaps because of local soil conditions, the chalk and colluvium being fertile and easily worked, the possibility of access to the Medway for fishing and transport, and possibly its communications generally.
- 4.4.2 Evidence is lacking to determine the size and character of the prehistoric settlement at any particular time, partly because of the shape and position of the area excavated; presumably further evidence may survive immediately to the south and south-west of the present excavation.
- 4.4.3 Ditches, presumably field boundaries, constitute evidence for agriculture, close to and associated with the settlement. The layout of these ditches seems to be markedly rectilinear, roughly aligned with the direction of the valley in which the site is situated and the major west–east through route. Can the ditches be dated more precisely?
- 4.4.4 Hearths may be evidence for metalworking associated with the settlement, but the date and purpose of these hearths need to be clarified. If these hearths are to do with metalworking can they be compared with similar possible evidence for metalworking found elsewhere in the area? Was metalworking concentrated here or distributed relatively widely? If concentrated, are good communications implied? Alternatively the hearths may be evidence for charcoal-burning, potentially at any date from the Bronze Age onwards. In this connection what proportion of the local land was down to wood, and was it coppiced?
- 4.4.5 Evidence for human burial, or for some equivalent ritual use of the land in a relatively elaborate and durable form, exists in a relatively conspicuous spot, downslope.

4.5 Towns and rural landscapes (100 BC-AD 1700)

4.5.1 A Roman villa existed about 800m to the west of the site (URL 1994, vol 2, map 3017; vol 3, gazetteer 1570), which was presumably connected to the main Roman road; evidence for

cultivation in the Late Iron Age/ early Roman period suggests that the site could have been situated within the villa's estate; are any of the field ditches dated to the Roman period or, if earlier, would they have persisted to this period?

- 4.5.2 Direct evidence seems to be lacking for the influence of the main Roman road here, running on the west–east route, unless the west–east ditch could have been Late Iron Age or Roman, in which case this ditch could possibly have been parallel to the road. If the local field system in the Roman period was rectilinear, was it aligned to the Roman main road? Would it align to large-scale rectilinear Roman field and road layouts conjectured on the Hoo Peninsula, 5–10km to the north-east?
- 4.5.3 One or more lynchets (undated, but presumably a result of continual ploughing) had been observed immediately upslope and to the north-west of the excavated area, as mentioned in the preliminary assessment (URL 1995, part 2, map 23).
- 4.5.4 The possibility that a Bronze Age barrow was ploughed out in the Late Iron Age/ early Roman period implies a relative disregard for the monuments of an earlier time.
- 4.5.5 There is no direct evidence for settlement later than the Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age, except the implication that the site may have been cultivated, or wooded, or both successively.
- 4.5.6 Direct evidence for medieval occupation is generally absent. The possibility of cultivation or similar disturbance is implied by the wholesale horizontal truncation of all earlier features, but the lack may partly be attributable to some, or all, of the site being wooded at some time; if so, was this managed woodland producing a crop for an urban as well as a rural market?

4.6 Recent landscapes (1700–1945)

- 4.6.1 In recent centuries the site could have been cultivated, rather than put down to wood or wood-pasture, but the area appears to have been relatively unpopulated and uncultivated. If so, when did agricultural cultivation of the site effectively end? Have alternative economic preferences operated for coppice and other woods, hunting preserves, or designed landscapes? Is this economic regime attributable to a physical cause, such as the possible absence of suitable water supplies for commercial agriculture, or is it a result of factors such as the consolidation of land-ownership?
- 4.6.2 The site was evidently used for practice gunnery during the Second World War, and perhaps spent ordnance may have fallen on the area fired by local anti-aircraft batteries.
- 4.6.3 The golf course is material evidence for a late 20th-century non-agricultural land use of a relatively affluent, recreational, suburban character, dependent on transport by private car.
- 4.6.4 All the potential contributions of the results of excavation of this site to the research aims above are of local, and no wider, importance.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This interim report was prepared by the site supervisor, Andrew Westman, with the help of Louise Rayner (prehistoric and Roman pottery), Jon Cotton (flints) and John Giorgi (botanical remains). The archaeological plans were digitised by Sarah Jones.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Nash, G, & Proctor, J, 1997 An archaeological evaluation at the Rochester and Cobham Golf Club, near Cobham, County of Kent, London: Pre-Construct Archaeology
- URL [Union Railways Limited], 1994 Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects, Final Report, Oxford Archaeological Unit
- URL, 1995 Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects, Supplementary Fieldwork Report, Oxford Archaeological Unit
- URL, 1996 Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Geophysical Surveys, Final Report, A Bartlett Associates, Oxford
- URL, 1997 Cobham Park Golf Course, Cobham, Kent (ARC CGC 97) Archaeological Evaluation, Oxford Archaeological Unit
- URL, 1998 Agreement for the provision of archaeological investigations at Pepper Hill to the River Medway (package 381)

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	212		
A1 plans	1		D
A4 plans	48		D
A1 sections			
A4 sections	4		
Small finds (boxes)	1 standard		UW
Films (monochrome) S=slide; PR=print	1PR		
Films (Colour)	1S, 3PR (+		
S=slide; PR=print	second set)		
Flint (boxes)	9 standard		UW
Pottery (boxes)	6 standard		UW
Fired clay (boxes)			
CBM (boxes)	2 standard		UW
Stone (boxes)			
Metalwork (boxes)			
Glass (boxes)			
Slag (boxes)			
Human Bone (boxes)			
Animal Bone (boxes)	1 standard		UW
Soil Samples (No.)	23		
Soil Samples (bags/tubs)	360 litres		UP
Soil Samples (Monolith/kubina tin)	2 Monolith, 11 snail sub-samples		UP

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

As part of a larger programme of archaeological investigation along the route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) commissioned the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) to undertake an archaeological excavation at the Rochester and Cobham Golf Course (site code ARC CGC 98), Cobham Park, Kent. Evaluations in 1995 and 1997 had indicated the archaeological potential of the site. The excavation concluded that the area of the site was a focus of activity in the Middle to Late Bronze Age, probably in part agricultural and possibly including one or more burials; presumably there was a settlement near the site, if not actually within it. Evidence was also found of activity in the Late Iron Age or early Roman period, probably agricultural.

The site measured approximately 320m west to east by 35m north to south and was investigated on a 'strip, map and sample' basis between August and October 1998. The site was situated on land sloping gently down from west to east, to the south of the A2 trunk road. Soil conditions did not allow bone to be preserved, and botanical material survived very poorly or not at all.

The excavation revealed widespread plough damage, all features being truncated horizontally up to 0.5m below the present ground level. On the higher area to the west many struck and burnt flints were collected during bulk stripping, probably indicating an area of occupation that had been ploughed out. Lower down the slope ditches, pits and postholes were traced where they were cut into the underlying natural colluvium. The most significant feature was a ring ditch measuring 18m to 20m in internal diameter, with a gap 2m wide to the south. A systematic sample of 50% of this ditch was excavated by hand. The initial fills of the ditch contained Late Bronze Age struck flints and pottery, and subsequent fills Late Iron Age/ early Roman pottery; the latter fills were probably deposited by slippage from the centre of the ring. Presumably the ditch was all that remained of a Bronze Age barrow, perhaps ploughed out in the Late Iron Age or early Roman period.

A total of 35 small pits and postholes, or similar features, were recorded in the centre of the site. Most of these features only survived to a shallow depth; two, marked by burning and scorching, may have been hearths; others were deeper and variously contained Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age pottery. No structural pattern in their layout was obvious. Two or three of these features contained considerable amounts of pottery, including many parts of single vessels. Nearly all these features were situated to the south of a straight ditch running roughly west—east and traceable for a distance of at least 100m. Traces of two much shorter north—south ditches were also found.

The subsoil which overlay the archaeological features contained many flecks of chalk, a result of marling, indicating a medieval or post-medieval plough soil. A metal detector survey of the topsoil found numerous cartridge cases and shrapnel—the site was a part of a practice range in the Second World War. More recently the construction of a golf course had caused large parts of the site to be badly disturbed by irrigation pipes, bunkers and platforms for teeing-off greens, the platforms being built up with a blue clay that had deeply stained the deposits underlying them.

APPENDIX 3: KENT SMR RECORD SHEET

Site Name: Cobham Golf Course, Area 330, Kent

Site code: ARC CGC 98

Summary:

Excavations at Rochester and Cobham Golf Course, Cobham, west of Rochester, Kent, were commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited and carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service in 1998, following field evaluations in 1995 and 1997.

District: Gravesham Parish: Cobham CP

Period(s):

- 1. Middle Bronze Age
- 2. Late Bronze Age
- 3. Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age
- 4. Late Iron Age/ early Roman
- 5. medieval/post-medieval

NGR (to west and east extremes):		100 km ref: TQ	
NGR Easting 6900		NGR Northing 6950	
NGR Easting 6930		NGR Northing 6928	
Type of Recording:	Evaluation	Watching-Brief	Field Walking
(Delete)	Excavation	Geophysical Survey	Measured Survey

Unit Undertaking Recording:

Date of Recording: (From) 17 August 1998

Museum of London Archaeology Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB

Summary of Field Results:

A ring ditch 18m to 20m in internal diameter with a gap about 2m wide in its south side was found cut into the colluvium. No sign remained of an overlying mound. The primary fills of the ditch contained flints and pottery of Bronze Age date, and its secondary fills contained Late Iron Age/ early Roman pottery.

Other features cut into the subsoil consisted of a linear ditch (visible for least 100m) and a concentration of approximately 35 other features, mainly small pits, post-holes and at least two possible hearths. These features variously contained struck flints and pottery dated to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. None of the postholes formed an obvious structure in plan, no bones were preserved, and botanical

(To) 23 October 1998

20 July 1999

Date:

material survived very poorly or not at all.

The site was apparently generally disturbed by ploughing and moderately disturbed by tree growth, and badly disturbed by the bunkers, teeing-off platforms and irrigation pipes of a modern golf course.

Location of Archive/Finds:

MoLAS temporarily

Bibliography:

- Nash, G, & Proctor, J, 1997 An archaeological evaluation at the Rochester and Cobham Golf Club, near Cobham, County of Kent, London: Pre-Construct Archaeology
- URL, 1994 Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects, Final Report, Oxford Archaeological Unit
- URL, 1995 Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects, Supplementary Fieldwork Report, Oxford Archaeological Unit
- URL, 1996 Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Geophysical Surveys, Final Report, A Bartlett Associates, Oxford
- URL, 1997 Cobham Park Golf Course, Cobham, Kent (ARC CGC 97) Archaeological Evaluation, Oxford Archaeological Unit
- URS, 1999 Cobham Golf Course (ARC CGC 98) archaeological excavation, interim report, Museum of London Archaeology Service

Summary Compiler:

Andrew Westman