

Channel Tunnel Rail Link
Union Railways South Ltd

Crismill Lane, Maidstone, Kent

ARC CSM 98

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Environmental Statement Route Window No.23

Contract No. S/400/SP/0009 P482

Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 1999

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FINAL REPORT

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

Oxford Archaeological Unit

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CRISMILL LANE, MAIDSTONE, KENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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CRISMILL LANE, MAIDSTONE, KENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Union Railways South to conduct a field evaluation on land situated adjacent to Crismill Lane, just to the north-east of the M20 motorway, near Maidstone, Kent (URL Grid 61832 35635; NGR TQ 8175 5580). The work was conducted between 19th and 22nd January 1999. Nine evaluation trenches were excavated in an area of c 2.4 hectares.

A single undated possible pit or ditch was uncovered. This contained two small pieces of burnt flint. The only other feature present was a former field boundary of modern date.

SECTION 1: FACTUAL STATEMENT

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation (Fig.1) on land situated adjacent to Crismill Lane, immediately to the northeast of the M20 motorway, near Maidstone, Kent (URL Grid 61832 35635; NGR TQ 8175 5580). The work was conducted on behalf of Union Railways South (URS) between 19th and 22nd January 1999, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation along the line of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The purpose of the investigation was to assess the impact of the rail link on the cultural heritage of the site. The site lies within Environmental Statement Route Window No.23 and an environmental assessment has been prepared (URL 1994).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by URS and agreed with the County Archaeologist and English Heritage.

1.2 Geology, topography and land-use

- 1.2.1 The drift geology consists of Gault Clay.
- 1.2.2 The site is *c* 2.4 hectares in area and slopes downwards from the north-west towards the south-east. Trench 3589TT at the north-west of the site lies at 69.95m above Ordnance Datum (OD) and Trench 3516TT at the south-east of the site lies at 63.09m above OD.
- 1.2.3 Prior to the evaluation, the site was in use as agricultural land and had been recently ploughed and planted with a winter crop. Ground conditions were wet with some standing surface water.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 No archaeological sites or finds have previously been recorded within the site boundaries.
- 1.3.2 Two finds scatters were identified to the south-east of the evaluation area by field walking surveys undertaken in 1994. These include prehistoric worked flint and late Iron Age to early Roman pottery. The closest of these scatters was situated *c* 250m to the south-east of the present evaluation area, and lies to the south of Snarkhurst Wood (URL 1994, vols 1 and 2, OAU numbers 1342 and 1343).
- 1.3.3 Two ditch and bank earthworks lay within Longham Wood, *c* 400m to the north-west of the present evaluation. These are undated and may represent early woodland or field boundaries (URL 1994, vols 1 and 2).
- 1.3.4 Evidence for Bronze settlement was found during excavations under the Maidstone Motoway Service Area. A quantity of brick has also been found to the south of the

M20 close to the intersection of the NSE Railway Line and Crismill Lane. This find spot lies 150m to the east of the present evaluation (URL 1994, OAU number 1244).

2 AIMS

2.1 The aims of the evaluation, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation, are as follows:

2.1.1 To determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains within the area of the evaluation.

2.1.2 To determine the presence and potential of environmental and economic indicators preserved in any archaeological features or deposits.

2.1.3 To establish the local, regional, national and international importance of such remains, and the potential for further archaeological fieldwork to fulfil local, regional and national research objectives.

3 METHOD

3.1 General

3.1.1 A detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the evaluation was prepared by URL and agreed with the County Archaeologist and English Heritage. The following summarises the archaeological aspects of the methodology and notes any deviations from the originally agreed specification.

3.2 Survey

3.2.1 The trench locations were set out in predetermined locations, using a total station theodolite. One trench (3591TT) was moved 20m to the south-west to avoid a mature tree. The trench locations have been plotted from digital information using the AutoCAD graphics programme (Fig. 2).

3.2.3 All co-ordinates used in this report relate to the URL local project grid unless otherwise stated. A full list of Ordnance Survey National Grid trench co-ordinates, together with the conversion formula used to calculate them, is included in the site archive. Individual trenches were planned manually in the field at a scale of 1:50. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3.2.4 The evaluation area (Fig. 2) falls within URL Environmental Route Window 23.

3.3 Excavation

3.3.1 Nine trenches were excavated to provide a 2% sample of the evaluation area.

3.3.2 All trenches were 30m long and 1.8m wide. They were excavated using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Trenches were generally machined to the top of the natural clay. In some cases excavation was continued to a depth of 1.2m, to ensure that archaeology was not sealed beneath subsoil layers.

3.3.3 The trenches were hand-cleaned except where archaeological deposits were clearly absent. Sample sections were excavated through all archaeological features and possible features. Artefacts were collected by context and submitted for specialist examination.

3.4 Recording

3.4.1 Recording followed the OAU single context recording system (Wilkinson ed, 1992). All site records and finds are marked with the site code (ARC CSM 99).

3.4.2 All trenches and archaeological features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Presentation of Results

4.1.1 Detailed trench descriptions are presented in Section 5. A summary of all contexts and finds is presented in the archaeological context inventory (Section 6). A report on the ceramic building material is contained in Appendix 1.

4.2 General stratigraphy

4.2.1 The underlying geology of the site varied from a stiff blue-grey clay on higher ground at the north-west of the site, to flints in a sandy clay matrix in the lower ground to the south-east.

4.2.2 A subsoil layer was recorded in all trenches beneath the present topsoil. This deposit varied from orange-brown silty clay to yellowish grey clay.

4.2.3 All trenches were sealed by up to 0.45m of ploughsoil.

4.3 Summary of archaeology

4.3.1 The evaluation located a single possible feature within trench 3516TT. This feature was only partially revealed within the trench. Its fill contained two small pieces of burnt flint.

It is possible that the feature may be a pit or ditch alignment but it is more likely to be the result of tree disturbance or localised geological variation.

4.3.2 Post-medieval brick or tile was recovered from the ploughsoil in two of the excavated trenches.

4.3.3 A field boundary ditch containing modern finds was identified in three of the trenches.

4.4 Site archive

4.4.1 The site archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification prepared by URS and agreed with English Heritage and the County Archaeologist. It includes six

electronic datasets for the Fieldwork Event, Contexts, Bulk Finds, Finds, Environmental Samples and Graphical Output.

5 TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Trench 3513TT (Fig.3)

- 5.1.1 The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.9 m.
- 5.1.2 The underlying natural varied within this trench from a grey gault clay at the northern end to clay with gravel and flints or flint and gravel with clayey sand to the south.
- 5.1.3 A single undated feature was recorded (1308). The fill (1305) consisted of orange grey sandy clay and contained no finds. The cut was steep-sided with a flat base. The somewhat irregular profile of the feature suggests that it is most likely to be of natural origin.

5.2 Trench 3516TT (Fig 4)

- 5.2.1 The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.92m.
- 5.2.2 A single undated feature was partially revealed within the trench. It consisted of a steep-sided cut with a flat base, filled by a dark blue-grey silty clay (1602). The feature was 0.5m deep, but it is unclear whether the feature was linear or discreet. Two small pieces of burnt flint, weighing 1g and 3g, were recovered from the fill. As no other finds were present the feature remains undated. The fill of the feature had occasional charcoal flecks but was otherwise very similar to an overlying subsoil layer (1601) (Fig 6). The feature could be of natural origin.

5.3 Trenches 3512TT, 3589TT, 3590TT, and 3591TT

- 5.3.1 The only feature present in these four trenches was a single north-west to south-east aligned field boundary ditch (1205) (8903) (9104), which was cut from beneath the present ploughsoil. The ditch, which was excavated at two points (in trenches 3512TT and 3589TT), had a steep-sided cut with a flat base, which measured 0.7m deep by 1.2m wide. Its fills contained post-medieval brick and tile, as well as modern plastic and metal. The ditch is likely to be a former field boundary corresponding with a surviving tree alignment crossing the site.

5.4 Trenches 3511TT, 3514TT, 3515TT.

- 5.4.1 These three trenches contained no archaeological finds or features.

Table 1: **ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Abbreviations:							
LN/EBA	Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age						
PRE	Prehistoric						
PRE PM	Medieval or earlier						
MED	Medieval						
POST MED	Post-medieval						
ARC CSM 99: Crismill Lane evaluation							
Trench	Context	Type	Description	Association	Finds	Number	Date
3511TT	1100	Layer	Topsoil	Over 1101			
3511TT	1101	Layer	Colluvial/ subsoil	over 1103			
3511TT	1102	Layer	Natural	under 1103			
3511TT	1103	Layer	Colluvial/ subsoil	over 1102			
3512TT	1200	Layer	Topsoil	over 1203			
3512TT	1201	Layer	Subsoil/ colluvial	Cut by 1205, over 1202			
3512TT	1202	Layer	Natural clay	Under 1201			
3512TT	1203	Fill	Upper ditch fill	Fill of 1205, over 1204	Plastic, metal		Modern
3512TT	1204	Fill	Lower ditch fill	Primary fill of 1205	CBM	2	Post med
3512TT	1205	Cut	Field boundary ditch	Cuts 1201			
3513TT	1300	Layer	Topsoil	Over 1301			
3513TT	1301	Layer	Subsoil / colluvial	Over 1302			
3513TT	1302	Layer	Natural	Over 1304			
3513TT	1303	Layer	Natural	Over 1304			
3513TT	1304	Layer	Natural	Over 1305 / 1307			
3513TT	1305	Fill	Fill of natural feature	Under 1304, fill of 1308			
3513TT	1306	Layer	Natural	Under 1304, over 1307			
3513TT	1307	Layer	Natural	Cut by 1308			
3513TT	1308	Cut	Natural feature	Filled by 1305, cuts 1307			
3514TT	1400	Layer	Topsoil	Over 1401			
3514TT	1401	Layer	Subsoil/colluvial	Over 1402			
3514TT	1402	Layer	Subsoil/colluvial	Over 1403/ 1404			
3514TT	1403	Layer	Natural clay	Under 1402			
3514TT	1404	Layer	Natural clay with flints	Under 1402			
3515TT	1500	Layer	Topsoil	Over 1501			
3515TT	1501	Layer	Subsoil / colluvial	Over 1502,1503,1504			
3515TT	1502	Layer	Subsoil / colluvial	Under 1501			
3515TT	1503	Layer	Natural clay	Under 1501			
3515TT	1504	Layer	Natural flints with clay	Under 1501			
3516TT	1600	Layer	Topsoil	Over 1601	CBM	1	Roman?
3516TT	1601	Layer	Subsoil / colluvial	Over 1602			
3516TT	1602	Fill	Fill of ditch	Fill of 1603	Burnt flint	2	Undated

Trench	Context	Type	Description	Association	Finds	Number	Date
3516TT	1603	Cut	Field boundary ditch	Filled by 1602, cuts 1604			
3516TT	1604	Layer	Flinty / gravelly natural	Over 1605			
3516TT	1605	Layer	Flinty clay natural	Under 1604			
3589TT	8900	Layer	Topsoil	Over 8901, 8902			
3589TT	8901	Layer	Subsoil / colluvial	Over 8904, cut by 8903			
3589TT	8902	Fill	Fill of ditch	Fill of 8903			
3589TT	8903	Cut	Field boundary ditch	Filled by 8902, cuts 8901			
3589TT	8904	Layer	Natural	Under 8901			
3590TT	9000	Layer	Topsoil	Over 8901			
3590TT	9001	Layer	Subsoil / colluvial	Over 8902			
3590TT	9002	Layer	Clay natural	Cut by 8904, under 8901			
3590TT	9003	Fill?	Fill of 8904	Fill of 8904			
3590TT	9004	Cut?	Land- drains	Filled by 8903, cuts 8902			
3591TT	9100	Layer	Over 9101, 9105	Topsoil			
3591TT	9101	Layer	Over 9106	Subsoil / colluvial			
3591TT	9102	Layer	Under 9106	Clayey flint natural			
3591TT	9103	Layer	Under 9106	Natural patchy clay			
3591TT	9104	Cut	Filled by 9105, cuts 9101	Field boundary ditch			
3591TT	9105	Fill	Fill of 9104	Fill of ditch			
3591TT	9106	Layer	Over 9102, 9103	Possible colluvium			

SECTION 2: STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Extent of archaeological deposits (Fig. 4)

7.1.1 The evaluation located two possible features in trenches 3513TT and 3516TT, both of which are undated and likely to be the result of tree root disturbance or localised geological variations. A modern field boundary ditch was recorded crossing four of the trenches.

7.2 Date and character of archaeological deposits

7.2.1 The undated feature in trench 3516TT could potentially be a pit or part of a ditch alignment. However it is more likely be of natural origin. The two fragments of burnt flint found in the fill do not contradict this interpretation.

7.3 Environmental evidence

7.3.1 No deposits containing material suitable for palaeo-environmental reconstruction were identified.

8 IMPORTANCE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

8.1 Survival/condition

8.1.1 There is no evidence to suggest that the site has been subject to heavy erosion by ploughing or other processes. The absence of archaeological material is therefore likely to reflect a low level of past human activity on the site.

8.2 Period

8.2.1 With the exception of a modern field boundary ditch no dateable features were found.

8.3 Rarity

8.3.1 No significant archaeology was identified.

8.4 Fragility/vulnerability

8.4.1 No significant archaeology was identified.

8.5 Diversity

8.5.1 No significant archaeology was identified.

8.6 Documentation

8.6.1 No archaeological works had been undertaken in relation to this site prior to the CTRL Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects (URL 1994).

8.7 Group value

8.7.1 Very limited group value can be attributed to the results of this evaluation.

8.8 Potential

8.8.1 The evaluation results suggest a low level of past human activity on the site. There is therefore no significant potential for further fieldwork.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- URL 1994 *Union Railways Limited, Channel Tunnel Rail Link: Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects. Final Report.* (4 vols. Prepared for URL by OAU).
- Wilkinson D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992).

APPENDIX 1

The Ceramic Building Material

By Kate Atherton, Oxford Archaeological Unit

- 1.0 Three fragments of ceramic building material were recovered during the evaluation. Two fragments, probably from a post-medieval roof-tile, were found in context 1204, the primary fill of a modern ditch (1205). One fragment, possibly of Roman date, was recovered from topsoil in trench 3516TT.