

**CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK
Union Railways (South) Ltd**

Project Area 430

**HURST WOOD, CHARING HEATH, KENT
ARC HWD 98**

**STRIP, MAP AND SAMPLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS
INTERIM REPORT
FINAL**

Contract S/400/SP/0008 P481

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
7th September 1999**

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INTERIM REPORT
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Prepared By: Date:	
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**Oxford Archaeological Unit
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7th September 1999**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to undertake archaeological works at Hurst Wood, to the south of Charing in Kent. This work formed part of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation carried out in advance of the construction of the CTRL. The site is centred on URL grid point 72960 28460 and NGR grid point TQ 92955 48461. A total area of 1.4 hectares was excavated to a strip, map and sample specification.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lay on a very slight south-facing slope on the north side of the Great Stour floodplain, adjacent to Hurst Wood (thought to be ancient woodland). The solid geology consists of Cretaceous Sandgate beds. The drift geology comprised light, mottled orange-grey clay silts with sand, mapped as Pleistocene Head Brickearth.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 Little was known about the archaeology of the area prior to the CTRL fieldwork. This has comprised fieldwalking by the OAU (*Channel Tunnel Rail Link: 1994 Surface Collection Survey*, Union Railways Ltd, 1994, 2 volumes) and an evaluation by Wessex Archaeology (WA), carried out in 1997 (*Archaeological Evaluation at Hurst Wood, Charing Heath, Kent, Channel Tunnel Rail Link*, Union Railways Ltd, 1997).

1.3.2 The potential of the site was suggested by a concentration of worked flint identified by the fieldwalking survey. The evaluation revealed a small number of undated archaeological features in the same area, including two shallow pits that were rich in fired clay and charcoal, a small gully and a stakehole. A quantity of worked flint, including a late Neolithic/ early Bronze Age plano-convex knife, were recovered from topsoil in the same area, although the features themselves produced no datable finds.

2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

2.1 Site summary

2.1.1 The strip, map and sample excavation produced a similar range of features to the evaluation: Twenty-seven shallow burnt pits were uncovered, characterised by fills rich in charcoal and burnt clay, and often showing signs of *in situ* burning of the natural brickearth. Also present were numerous alignments of shallow stakeholes. These were on the same alignment as the post-medieval cultivation marks and are likely to be associated with comparatively recent hop growing.

2.2 Periods represented

Possible Bronze Age features (c. 2000 BC – 900BC)

- 2.2.1 Pit 27 contained 5 abraded sherds (10 g) of possible Bronze Age pottery and Pit 140 contained 1 abraded sherd (1 g) of similar date. Pits 53, 102, 122, 126, 136, 140 and tree-throw holes 12 and 49 produced prehistoric struck flint. The low density of finds and abraded state of the pottery suggests that all of this material could be residual.

Possible Iron Age features (c. 800 BC – 43 AD)

- 2.2.2 An irregular feature interpreted as a tree-throw hole (49) produced 2 sherds (7 g) of Iron Age pottery.

Possible Romano-British features (43 AD – 410 AD)

- 2.2.3 Pit 46 produced a single sherd (4 g) of possible Romano-British pottery, however this was recovered from the surface of the feature and is not securely related to the fill (47).

Possible post-medieval/ modern features (c. 1500 AD – present)

- 2.2.4 A number of postholes weathered out of the natural which clearly cut the post-medieval/ modern cultivation furrows. These are interpreted as evidence of comparatively recent hop cultivation.

2.3 Feature Types

- 2.3.1 The site was characterised by a scatter of burnt, shallow pits. Very few artefacts were recovered from these features, but the on present evidence, an Iron Age, Roman or later date seems most likely. The function of the pits is unknown, but their proximity to Hurst Wood suggests that they may be linked to charcoal burning or woodland clearance activity.

2.4 Artefactual Remains

- 2.4.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered, including 102 pieces of burnt and worked flint, 6 abraded Bronze Age and 2 Iron Age sherds, and a single Romano-British sherd. The finds have yet to be examined in detail, but the fragments of pottery are generally very small and abraded. The very small number of prehistoric artefacts from the burnt pits could very well be intrusive and do not necessarily provide a reliable date for the burnt features, although they produced no securely stratified later material.

2.5 Palaeo-environmental and Economic Evidence

- 2.5.1 Fourteen soil samples were recovered from approximately 50% of the burnt features. The samples have yet to be examined in detail, but are clearly rich in wood charcoal.

3 FIELDWORK EVENT AIMS

- Establish the extent, morphology and function of the remains.
 - Determine whether they are associated with other contemporary features and form part of a settlement.
 - Recover dated environmental and economic indicators if present.
- 3.1 The only features of potential archaeological interest comprise 27 burnt pits. The investigation has succeeded in establishing the general morphology of the features, has recovered material for radiocarbon dating and limited artefactual dating evidence. However, it has so far failed to conclusively identify the date or function of the features, or to define the full extent of their distribution.

4 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL

- 4.2 Until the dating of the burnt pits is established by radiocarbon methods the potential of the site cannot be accurately assessed. The few finds recovered from these features are of mixed date and could well be residual. In terms of addressing the research objectives for the Project, the features could potentially shed light on aspects of agricultural or woodland management, particularly with regard to the Wealden Greensand landscape zone, if their function can be satisfactorily demonstrated. However, identifying their function is only likely to be achieved by a study of the charred remains, which is unlikely to provide conclusive results. In addition, the lack of excavated settlement sites of any period in the vicinity limits the potential of the site within the framework of the landscape study.

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	143		
A1 plans	7		
A4 plans	50		
A1 sections	0		
A4 sections	50		
Small finds	6		
Films (monochrome) S=slide; PR=print	4		M
Films (Colour) S=slide; PR=print	5		M
Flint (boxes)	1 size 3	102	W, M
Pottery (boxes)	1 size 4	6	W, M
Fired clay (boxes)	see misc. finds		
CBM (boxes)	0		
Stone (boxes)	see misc. finds		
Metalwork (boxes)	see misc. finds		
Glass (boxes)	0		
Slag (boxes)	see misc. finds		
Human Bone (boxes)	0		
Animal Bone (boxes)	0		
Misc.	1 size 4	66	W,M
Soil Samples (No.)	14		P
Soil Samples (bags/tubs)	31		P
Soil Samples (Monolith/kubiena tin)			

Key to box sizes

Cardboard boxes

Size 1 = Bulk box	391mm x 238mm x 210mm
Size 2 = Half box	391mm x 238mm x 100mm
Size 3 = Quarter box	386mm x 108 mm x 100mm
Size 4 = Eighth box	213 mm x 102 mm x 80 mm
Size 5 = Sixteenth box	110mm x 88 mm x 60 mm
Size 6 = Skeleton box	600 mm x 241 mm x 225 mm

Plastic boxes

Size 4 = Small	(dimensions as size 4 cardboard)
Size 8 = Medium	260mm x 184mm x 108mm
Size 9 = Large	308mm x 216mm x 144mm

APPENDIX 2**SUMMARY REPORT****Hurst Wood, Charing Heath, Kent.** (NGR TQ 92955 48461).

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to carry out a strip, map and sample excavation on a site to the south of Charing Heath (centred on URL grid 72960 28460; NGR grid TQ 92955 48461). The work was conducted between 14th September 1998 and 1st October 1998, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation along the line of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Twenty-seven pits, 17 postholes, 4 tree-throw holes and 2 furrows were excavated. Of those features 2 pits contained Bronze Age pottery, one tree-throw hole produced Iron Age pottery and a further pit contained a single Romano-British sherd. Six pits and two postholes contained flint. It is likely that the postholes and the furrows are associated with a post-medieval hop garden. Many of the pits contained evidence of burning and may have been associated with charcoal production, woodland clearance or some other form of woodland management.

The pits were all fairly similar, they had flat bases and short, steep, concave sides. Many contained evidence of burning '*in situ*', including fire hardened and reddened bases and ashy, charcoal-rich fills. It is proposed that radiocarbon dates will be obtained from the fills to ascertain whether the pits are broadly contemporary (possibly relating to the prehistoric flint found in the topsoil) or if the activity was spread over a longer time period.

APPENDIX 3

SMR SHEET

Site Name: Hurst Wood, Charing Heath, Kent.	
Summary: Twenty-seven pits, 17 postholes, 4 tree-throw holes and 2 furrows were excavated. Of those features 2 pits contained Bronze Age pottery, one tree-throw hole produced Iron Age pottery and a further pit contained a single Romano-British sherd. Six pits and two postholes contained flint. It is likely that the postholes and the furrows are associated with a post-medieval hop garden. Many of the pits contained evidence of burning and may have been associated with charcoal production, woodland clearance or some other form of woodland management.	
District: Ashford	Parish: Charing Heath
Period(s): 1. Later prehistoric 2. Late Iron Age/ early Romano-British 3. Post-medieval/ modern	
NGR Easting: TQ 92955	NGR Northing: 48461
Type of Recording: Evaluation (Delete) Excavation	Watching — Brief Geophysical Survey Field Walking Measured Survey
Date of Recording: (From) 14/09/99	(To) 1/10/99
Unit Undertaking Recording: Oxford Archaeological Unit	
Summary of Fieldwork Results: The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to carry out a strip, map and sample excavation on a site to the south of Charing Heath (centred on URL grid 72960 28460; NGR grid TQ 92955 48461). The work was conducted between 14th September 1998 and 1 st October 1998, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation along the line of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Twenty-seven pits, 17 postholes, 4 tree-throw holes and 2 furrows were excavated. Of those features 2 pits contained Bronze Age pottery, one tree-throw hole produced Iron Age pottery and a further pit contained a single Romano-British sherd. Six pits and two postholes contained flint. It is likely that the postholes and the furrows are associated with a post-medieval hop garden. Many of the pits contained evidence of burning and may have been associated with charcoal production, woodland clearance or some other form of woodland management. The pits were all fairly similar, they had flat bases and short, steep, concave sides. Many contained evidence of burning ' <i>in situ</i> ', including fire hardened and reddened bases and ashy, charcoal-rich fills. It proposed that radiocarbon dates will be obtained from the fills to ascertain whether the pits are broadly contemporary, (possibly relating to the prehistoric flint found in the topsoil) or if the activity was spread over a longer time period.	
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Bibliography:	
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