CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK
UNION RAILWAYS LIMITED

Archaeological Evaluation at Lenham Heath (ARC LHT97), Kent

Environmental Statement Route Window 27

FINAL FIELDWORK REPORT

16th March 1998

Contract no. 194/870
WA Report no. 43505d

Wessex Archaeology

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Volume 1 of 1

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Contents

TABLES

APPENDICES

FIGURES (after Appendices)

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Executive Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Union Railways Limited to carry out an archaeological evaluation on a site to the south of Lenham Heath village (centred on URL grid point 71400 29400; NGR grid point TQ 91400 29400), known as Lenham Heath. The potential for archaeological remains within the evaluation area had been identified by an earlier Environmental Statement (URL 1994) which included geophysical prospection (URL 1996). This potential was defined as the possibility of discovering features and remains indicated by anomalies noted during geophysical prospection, although gradiometer scanning failed to locate any anomalies of obvious archaeological interest, and variations within the magnetic susceptibility data set appeared to reflect modern disturbance and recent land use. The evaluation was, therefore, designed as a control evaluation of the geophysical prospection survey.

The evaluation revealed a small number of archaeological features, all of post-medieval or modern date, towards the western end of the evaluation area. Two post-holes are likely to represent a former fence line, and a group of shallow scoops an area of disturbance and associated rubbish disposal (possibly related to motorway construction works). A series of parallel, broad, shallow linear features in one trench are likely to have been of post-medieval or modern date and an agricultural origin (probably resulting from deeper ploughing) is suggested, possibly to facilitate drainage. The scoops and linear features lie within an 'area of increased noise' recorded during the earlier geophysical survey, and it is suggested that these features and associated deposits were the cause of this anomaly. Other than modern pottery and vessel glass, earlier finds comprise a worn Roman coin, one sherd of Romano-British pottery and a single sherd of medieval pottery, all recovered from subsoil contexts.

FACTUAL STATEMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Union Railways Limited (URL) to carry out an archaeological evaluation on a site to the south of Lenham Heath village (centred on URL grid point 71400 29400; NGR grid point TQ 91400 29400; **Figure 1**), known as **Lenham Heath** (site code ARC LHT97; Environmental Statement Route Window 27).

1.1.2 The evaluation forms part of a programme of archaeological investigation along the proposed route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL), and was preceded by an Environmental Assessment (URL 1994) and geophysical prospection (URL 1996).

1.1.3 The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with a written *Agreement for the provision of Archaeological Investigations* (URL 1997), which defined the scope, aims and methods for the project. In addition to general aims, the following site specific aim was identified:

- *to act as a control evaluation of the geophysical prospection survey undertaken during the CTRL Environmental Assessment.*

1.1.4 The fieldwork was carried out between 1st December 1997 and 5th December 1997, with preliminary survey work carried out on 1st December 1997.

1.2 Site Description, Topography, Geology and Hydrography

1.2.1 The site was situated within a narrow, east-to-west parcel of land defined by the M20 motorway to the south, and existing field boundaries to the east and west. The northern boundary of the site was defined by the limit of proposed development, and did not correlate with existing land divisions. The site covered an area of *c*. 4.1 hectares. A footpath marked by a shallow, north-to-south hollow-way crossed the site towards the west end, with another footpath to the east marked by a low east-to-west earthwork. The evaluation comprised 12 machine trenches (trench 1959TT - trench 1970TT inclusive), each measuring 30 m by 1.80 m, which lay within four plots of pasture.

1.2.2 The site occupied a very gentle south-facing slope on the north side of the River Great Stour flood plain, descending within the site limits from a height of *c*. 93 m

above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the west to 78.2 m aOD in the east, with the steepest slope towards the west end. In a broader context, the area is situated to the south of, and below, the sand, gault and chalk ridge that rises to form the North Downs, which in the immediate area are at a height of *c*. 190 m aOD, along the line of the North Downs/ Pilgrims' Way.

1.2.3 Underlying drift geology for the area is recorded as Pleistocene Head Brickearth, with more recent alluvium associated with the course of the River Great Stour to the south-west. Solid geology is recorded as comprising Cretaceous Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds, outcropping at the base of the sand, gault and chalk ridge that forms the edge of the North Downs to the north (Ordnance Survey 1976).

1.2.4 The hydrography of the area is dominated by the River Great Stour, which follows a meandering course from north-west to south-east along the foot of the North Downs, *c*. 0.5 km to the south of the site. In the immediate vicinity of the site a number of unnamed south-flowing streams spring from the footslopes of the North Downs, feeding into the Great Stour. At the time of the evaluation, following prolonged rainfall, part of the site (in the vicinity of trenches 1961TT - 1963TT) was extremely wet with several areas of shallow, standing water.

1.3 Methods

1.3.1 As noted above (paragraph 1.1.3), the fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the *Agreement for the provision of Archaeological Investigations* (URL 1997), which contains a detailed methodology for all aspects of the evaluation fieldwork. This methodology will not be repeated in full here, although a brief summary is reiterated below:

- *allowing for agreed variations noted below, all trenches were located to a horizontal accuracy of ±0.50 m and elevation accuracy of ±0.02 m (per kilometre traverse) in relation to trench location plans provided and Ordnance Datum (Newlyn);*

- *all trenches were excavated in discrete 0.10-0.20 m spits using a tracked excavator with a 1.80 m wide toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision, to either 1.20 m depth, the surface of* in situ *geology, or the surface at which archaeological remains could be identified, whichever was encountered first;*

- *all trenches were cleaned manually, with a sufficient sample of all exposed features investigated, and sampled where appropriate, in order to fulfil the aims of the evaluation; and,*

- *all recording conformed to the standards of current best practice, and included a full graphic and photographic record of all stages of the evaluation.*

2 RESULTS

2.1 General

2.1.1 In summary, 12 evaluation trenches were excavated within the defined site (**Figure 2**), revealing three potentially archaeological groups of features, all of which were investigated. These features were located towards the west end of the site, and broadly correlated with an 'area of increased noise' recorded during the earlier geophysical survey (URL 1996, figure 57).

2.1.2 The three groups of potentially archaeological features comprised two post-holes (trench 1959TT), a series of parallel, broad, shallow linear features (trench 1961TT), and a group of shallow, amorphous scoops (trench 1962TT). Artefacts and material recovered from these features comprise a small lump of concrete from one of the post-holes in trench 1961TT and a small quantity of modern pottery and bottle glass from one of the scoops in trench 1962TT.

2.1.3 A context inventory (by trench) is provided in **Appendix 1**, whilst deposits and features of note are described below.

2.2 Stratigraphy

2.2.1 The stratigraphic sequence identified within the evaluation area can be broadly summarised as:

- Head Brickearth;
- Lower Greensand in the north-western corner of the site;
- Subsoil;
- Modern topsoil.

Head Brickearth

2.2.2 This natural deposit was recorded within 10 of the 12 trenches (trenches 1961TT - 1970TT), sealed directly by subsoil, and can be characterised as a brownish yellow silty to clayey sand.

Lower Greensand

2.2.3 This natural deposit was recorded within the two trenches (trenches 1959TT - 1960TT) on the higher ground at the west end of the site, sealed directly by subsoil, and can be characterised as a brownish yellow sand.

Subsoil

2.2.3 This occurred in all of the trenches and can be characterised as a yellowish brown sandy silt loam with occasional small subrounded flint gravel. It was up to 0.2 m thick and directly overlay natural deposits, and was sealed by topsoil.

Topsoil

2.2.4 In general, topsoil encountered throughout the evaluation area comprised 0.15 - 0.3 m thickness of mid to dark brown sandy silty loam with occasional small to medium subrounded flint gravel. The topsoil was covered by grass pasture in all trenches.

2.2.6 Although the subsoil represents a disturbed modern context, a number of residual finds were recorded from this horizon. These include a Roman coin from trench 1970TT, a sherd of Romano-British pottery from trench 1960TT, and a single sherd of medieval pottery from trench 1962TT.

2.3 Structural Report (Figure 3)

Trench 1960TT (Figure 3)

2.3.1 Two rectangular post-holes (6004 and 6006) lay 8 m apart towards the south end of the trench. Each measured approximately 0.35 m by 0.3 m and was *c.* 0.2 m deep. Both were filled with greyish brown sandy loam, and one (6006) contained a small lump of concrete; a partly rotted post (approximately 0.25 m square) lay in the bushes to the south, on the edge of the field, and it is suggested that this came from one of the post-holes.

Trench 1961TT (Figure 3)

2.3.2 A series of at least eight parallel linear features (group number 6105), aligned approximately north to south (parallel to the slope), were exposed in this trench. These shallow, gully-like features were up to *c.* 2 m wide and rather irregular in plan. They were open U-shaped in profile, between 0.2 and 0.25 m deep, and cut through the subsoil into the surface of the underlying natural. None of the features produced any finds and it is suggested below that they were plough furrows.

2.3.3 Two parallel stone-filled field drains ran at a slightly oblique angle to and cut linear features 6105.

Trench 1962TT (Figure 3)

2.3.4 A group of small, irregular, shallow scoops (group number 6204) was exposed covering almost the entire area of the trench. These rather amorphous features were up to *c.* 2 m in diameter and 0.4 m deep, and cut through the subsoil into the surface of the natural. Limited investigation produced a small quantity of modern pottery and bottle glass.

2.4 Artefactual Report by Lorraine Mepham

2.4.1 A very small quantity of artefactual material, in a limited range of material types, was recovered from three trenches, predominantly from subsoil contexts, but also from one archaeological feature. Finds totals, by material type and by context, and including finds extracted from soil samples, are given in **Appendix 2**. The date range of the material recovered is Romano-British to modern. Post-medieval/modern finds are not described in detail here, but are summarised in section 2.4.4. Other finds are briefly described by material type below.

Pottery

2.4.2 Of the seven sherds recovered, one has been identified as a Romano-British coarse oxidised ware body sherd, not closely datable (trench 1960TT), and one as a medieval coarseware jug handle of probable 12th or 13th century date (trench 1962TT).

Metalwork

2.4.3 One Roman copper alloy coin was recovered (trench 1970TT). This is a badly worn large bronze coin of the second century AD – *Obv:* Female head r. *Rev:* Fig. standing holding staff. Further cleaning is necessary, before a closer identification can be attempted.

Post-medieval and modern finds

2.4.4 These comprise ceramic building material, glass and pottery, and are summarised in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: Post-medieval artefact summary

Category	Description
CBM:	fragments of roof tiles, not closely datable
Glass:	three fragments clear bottle/jar (19th/20th century)
Pottery:	two sherds redware, one sherd creamware, one sherd bone china, one sherd fine whiteware (19th/20th century)

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Extent of Archaeological Remains

3.1.1 Three groups of archaeological features were recorded in three trenches towards the western end of the site (trenches 1960TT, 1961TT and 1962TT). Two post-holes were present in one trench (post-holes 6004 and 6006 in trench 1960TT), a series of parallel, shallow linear features/gullies and two field drains in another (linear features 6105 in trench 1961TT), and a group of shallow, amorphous scoops in the third (scoops 6004 in trench 1962TT). The small amount of dating evidence recovered indicates that the post-holes in trench 1960TT and the scoops in trench 1962TT were of modern date, and the linear features in trench 1961TT are also thought to have been of post-medieval or modern date although they produced no dating evidence. In addition, one sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered from trench 1960TT, one sherd of medieval pottery from trench 1962TT, and a worn Roman coin from trench 1970TT (at the east end of the site), all from subsoil contexts.

3.1.2 The preliminary geophysical survey (comprising magnetic scanning and magnetic susceptibility survey) of the evaluation area highlighted an 'area of increased noise' that broadly corresponds with the extent of the sub-surface archaeological remains indicated by the features identified in trenches 1961TT and 1962TT (URL 1996, 18-19, figures 57 - 59).

3.2 Nature of Archaeological Remains

3.2.1 All archaeological features survived as shallow cuts (i.e. not greater than 0.4 m deep) excavated through subsoil into the surface of the *in situ* geological natural, and were sealed by modern topsoil. Inter-relationships between features were not observed except in the case of the parallel linear features (6105) in trench 1961TT which were cut by two stone-filled field drains.

3.2.2 Structural remains, comprising two post-holes (6004 and 6006), were recorded in trench 1960TT. It is not possible to suggest that these features represent building remains, and it is perhaps more likely that they indicate a fenceline.

3.2.3 The series of linear features/gullies (group no. 6105) in trench 1961TT are provisionally interpreted as drainage features created by deep ploughing on this area of gently sloping ground. That drainage is/was a problem in this area is indicated by the presence of two stone-filled field drains, the only trench where

these were encountered, and by the accumulation of standing water in this part of the site during the evaluation.

3.2.4 The remaining features, comprising a group of scoops (group no. 6205) in trench 1962TT, were generally discrete, and on the basis of archaeological components within their fills, morphologically very similar. Although finds were recovered from only one of these features they are considered broadly contemporaneous and of modern date. It is possible that they represent shallow pits associated with activity relating to construction of the adjacent motorway, or the disposal of household/farm refuse from nearby settlement.

3.2.5 A small quantity of artefacts recovered were provenanced from subsoil contexts, comprising one worn Roman coin, one sherd of Romano-British pottery and one sherd of medieval pottery. It is probable that this material represents casual losses or rubbish disposal in an agricultural environment, and is not, therefore, in the absence of contemporaneous archaeological deposits, indicative of settlement activity on the site.

3.3 Character of Site

3.3.1 The body of evidence (incorporating geophysical results, subsoil finds from machine trenches and subsurface archaeological features) would appear to indicate an absence of settlement activity within the site in all periods. It is considered likely that this evidence represents predominantly agricultural activity, with slight evidence for possible activity associated with motorway construction in the second half of the 20th century.

3.4 Site Chronology

3.4.1 All archaeological features examined are considered to have been of post-medieval or modern date. Artefacts recovered from the topsoil comprise one worn Roman coin, one sherd of Romano-British pottery and one sherd of medieval pottery.

4 IMPORTANCE OF REMAINS

4.1 Scheduled Monument Criteria

4.1.1 The Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling monuments has been addressed. The remains recorded during this evaluation do not satisfy any of the criteria as defined.

4.2 Condition

4.2.1 Archaeological features recorded during the evaluation are preserved as shallow cuts in the subsoil and the surface of *in situ* geological deposits, all sealed by the modern topsoil and pasture.

4.2.2 Cultural remains have survived, including pottery, glass, ceramic building material and metal objects. However, these finds are uncommon and the majority can be confidently identified as post-medieval or later.

4.3 Period

4.3.1 Settlement patterns are not well-documented in the area. Secure chronological indicators from the evaluation are restricted to a Roman coin, one sherd of Romano-British pottery and a single sherd of medieval pottery, all of which were recovered from subsoil contexts, and modern (19th-20th century) finds recovered from excavated features.

4.4 Rarity

4.4.1 The post-medieval/modern archaeological remains recorded during the evaluation are of little note, appearing to represent feature types often regarded as characteristic of 'agricultural' activity. The very small quantity of Romano-British and medieval finds are likely to represent stray losses and/or manuring on fields.

4.5 Vulnerability

4.5.1 There is little evidence that the archaeological remains have been subjected to truncation. Should deeper ploughing or any other invasive groundwork occur, then this situation will clearly not remain the case. All archaeological remains will be under threat from construction of the CTRL.

4.6 Diversity

4.6.1 Although feature types include both discrete and linear remains, there was no significant diversity of features or finds.

4.7 Documentation

4.7.1 Little is recorded of the evaluation area. Hurst Wood itself is marked on 17th-century estate plans, and may well have medieval origins, whilst both Lenham Heath and Charing Heath are both recorded as heathland that were enclosed in the 19th-century.

4.8 Group Value

4.8.1 There appears to be little group value that can be attributed to the results of this evaluation.

4.9 Potential

Structural

4.9.1 The archaeological features recorded offer little potential for contributing to the understanding of settlement and agricultural activity in the area.

Artefactual

4.9.2 The majority of finds are of post-medieval or modern date and have no further archaeological potential; it is recommended that these finds are discarded prior to the final deposition of the archive. The Roman coin, one sherd of Romano-British pottery and single sherd of medieval pottery can be used only as a possible indicator of activity in the vicinity, and there is no potential for further analysis.

4.10 Discussion

4.10.1 The potential for archaeological remains within the evaluation area had been identified by an earlier Environmental Statement (URL 1994) and geophysical survey (URL 1996). This potential was defined as the possibility of discovering features and remains indicated by anomalies noted during geophysical prospection, although gradiometer scanning failed to locate any anomalies of obvious archaeological interest, and variations within the magnetic susceptibility data set appeared to reflect modern disturbance and recent land use. The evaluation was, therefore, designed as a control evaluation of the geophysical prospection survey.

4.10.2 The evaluation revealed a small number of archaeological features, all of post-medieval or modern date, towards the western end of the evaluation area. Two post-holes are likely to represent a former fence line, and a group of shallow scoops an area of disturbance and associated rubbish disposal (possibly related to motorway construction works). A series of parallel, broad, shallow linear features in one trench are likely to have been of post-medieval or modern date and an agricultural origin (probably resulting from deeper ploughing) is suggested, possibly to facilitate drainage. The scoops and linear features lie within an 'area of increased noise' recorded during the earlier geophysical survey, and it is suggested that these features and associated deposits were the cause of this anomaly.

4.10.3 There was no significant variation in the stratigraphic sequence of topsoil above subsoil which directly overlay *in situ* geological subsoil. Earlier finds comprising a worn Roman coin, one sherd of Romano-British pottery and a single sherd of

medieval pottery, all recovered from subsoil contexts, are considered to represent stray losses rather than material derived from subsurface features or deposits.

4.10.4 The specific aim of the evaluation (section 1.1.3) was achieved. A number of subsoil features of post-medieval/modern date were discovered which were in close proximity to and probably associated with the principal geophysical anomaly recorded during the CTRL Environmental Assessment fieldwork (URL 1996). Elsewhere, the absence of subsoil features recorded in the evaluation confirms the absence of any anomalies of obvious archaeological indicated by the geophysical survey.

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