

UNION RAILWAYS LIMITED

**LEACON LANE**

ARC LLA 98

An Archaeological Evaluation

Contract No. 194/870P4



Museum of London Archaeology Service  
February 1999

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**LEACON LANE**

ARC LLA 98

An Archaeological Evaluation

**Evaluation Report**

Volume 1 of 1

Contract No.194\870P4

Prepared by:
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Museum of London Archaeology Service  
February 1999

**LEACON LANE NEAR ASHFORD,  
KENT**

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION***

**SUMMARY**

*The Museum of London Archaeology Service undertook an archaeological evaluation on the site of Leacon Lane, to the south of Charing and to the north-west of Ashford, between the 27th of July and the 3rd of August 1998. The evaluation explored the area north-west of a site evaluated in 1997, ARC BWD 97, and forms part of a larger programme of archaeological investigations along the line of the future Channel Tunnel Rail Link, the aim of which is to assess the effect of the construction of the new railway upon the cultural heritage.*

*Apart from natural geological deposits one archaeological feature, a pit with a burnt fill, was encountered in trench 3241TT. The only other disturbances below topsoil were caused by several ancient tree boles and a number of recent land drains.*

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Kent SMR

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**SECTION 1: FACTUAL STATEMENT****1 BACKGROUND****1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) was commissioned by Union Railways Limited (URL) to carry out an archaeological evaluation at Leacon Lane, between the 27/7/98 and 3/8/98, on land adjacent and to the north of the M20, about 2km south of Charing and approximately 7km to the north-west of Ashford, Kent (Fig 1). The evaluation forms part of a larger programme of archaeological investigations along the line of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, the aim being to assess the effect of the construction of the new railway upon the cultural heritage. An Environmental Assessment has been prepared (URL 1994). This evaluation is within CTRL route window 29.

1.1.2 The evaluation consisted of 17 trenches numbered 3229TT to 3245TT.

1.1.3 The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation, prepared by URL, detailing the scope and methods of the evaluation, including this report. The area of the evaluation is shown on Fig 2. Grid co-ordinates illustrated an all figures or written in the text relate to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Project Grid unless otherwise stated.

**1.2 Geology, landscape and landuse**

1.2.1 The natural geology of the area consisted of Gault Clay, firm light yellow brown to light grey clay containing concentrations of flint.

1.2.2 The site is situated to the north of Leacon Lane. Trenches 3234TT to 3439TT were elevated slightly in relation to trenches 3229TT to 3233TT, which were located in a slight 'valley'. Land use at the time of the works was well established pasture.

1.2.3 The site covered an area with irregular boundaries approximately 300m long and 200m wide. The following profile was recorded for ground level across the site, from 3230TT (east) to 3244TT (west) to 3241TT (south):

82.32m Ordnance Datum (OD hereafter) at 3230TT

84.01m OD at 3234TT

83.19m OD at 3235TT

82.06m OD at 3238TT

84.32m OD at 3244TT

82.18m OD at 3243TT

77.47m OD at 3241TT

## **2 SPECIFICATION**

### **2.1 Aims**

2.1.1 In general the works aimed to provide information to determine:

- The presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any subsoil deposits of archaeological interest which may be associated with, or in close proximity to, the surface concentrations of prehistoric flint recorded during the earlier URL Environment Assessment;
- The presence and potential of environmental and economic indicators preserved in any archaeological features or deposits;
- The local, regional and national importance of such remains, and the potential for further fieldwork to fulfil local, regional and national research objectives.

2.1.2 More specifically, the works aimed:

- To extend the archaeological knowledge in the area situated between sites evaluated previously in 1997, East of Pluckley Road (ARC PRD 97) and South of Station Road, Parsonage Farm (ARC PFM 97).



### **3 METHODS**

#### **3.1 General**

3.1.1 A detailed Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation was prepared by URL and agreed with the County Archaeologist and English Heritage. The following text is intended only to amplify certain aspects of the evaluation methodology.

#### **3.2 Survey**

3.2.1 The trench locations were surveyed by MoLAS, based on a trench location plan supplied by URL (drawing number 430-DGH-08200-62033-AB). As the only alteration, trench 3230TT was moved further east, well clear of live cables.

3.2.2 The trenches were accurately positioned and marked out with pegs using a total station and datalogger, traversing off the URL survey control. The pegs were located on the western side of a north to south trench or the southern side of an east to west trench.

3.2.3 The trenches have been plotted on Fig 2 from digital information provided by URL using an AutoCAD graphics programme. The trenches are located on the URL site grid.

3.2.4 The archaeological feature in trench 3241TT was planned at 1:20, taking as a grid the line between the two survey pegs used to mark out the trench. A profile of the feature was drawn.

#### **3.3 Excavation**

3.3.1 The total area for the Leacon Lane evaluation was approximately 72371m<sup>2</sup>. Seventeen trenches 30m in length and 2.00m wide were excavated.

3.3.2 The trenches were excavated using a 360° tracked excavator with a flat bladed bucket 2.00m wide. The trenches were excavated to the natural clay or to a maximum depth of 1.20m. A section at each end of all the trenches was hand cleaned to ensure the stratigraphy could be accurately recorded. Where necessary longer sections and the base of the trench was hand cleaned to determine stratigraphic relationships, and investigate archaeological and geological features.

3.3.3 One archaeological feature was identified: a pit which was half-sectioned.

### **3.4 Recording**

- 3.4.1 Recording was by the standard Museum of London single context recording system but with modifications to adapt the system to the large area under evaluation. Specifically these adaptations concerned layers: where a layer was judged to be the same in two or more trenches (such as topsoil, subsoil and some uppermost geological deposits), the same context number was used. If there was any doubt as to the equality of a layer a new context number was issued. A trench sheet was completed for each trench, on the reverse of which a sketch plan and section (of the entire trench) was drawn using metric measurements and OD heights.
- 3.4.2 The archaeological feature recorded in 3241TT was drawn in plan and section at 1:20.
- 3.4.3 For all trenches the metric OD heights were established, each trench having a Temporary Bench Mark incorporated onto one of the survey marker pegs.
- 3.4.4 The results were almost entirely negative but due to an error the site supervisor did not compile a photographic record of the evaluation.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 General

- 4.1.1 All trenches revealed a section of geology sealed by subsoil, which was in turn sealed by topsoil.
- 4.1.2 One archaeological feature, a pit [8] was located in 3241TT. This pit cut geological layers and was half-sectioned. Pit [8] appeared to be sealed by the subsoil but this apparent seal is probably the result of the subsoil being re-worked by previous plough action (which has truncated the upper parts of pit [8]).
- 4.1.3 The subsoil consisted of firm clay silt or sandy clay that varied in colour from light grey-yellow to creamy grey and greyish brown. Concentrations (less than 10 % to 20%) of flint pebbles and nodules occurred throughout the subsoil. In general subsoil thickness varied from 0.20m to 0.30m. In trenches 3234TT and 3237TT the subsoil thickness was 0.40m perhaps indicating hill wash.
- 4.1.4 The topsoil was generally 0.30m thick, occasionally up to 0.45m (in trench 3232TT and 3234TT) and consisted of firm light brown-grey silty sand with frequent flint pebbles [1].

## 5 TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Trench with archaeological feature

#### 5.1.1 Trench 3241TT (Fig 3)

5.1.2 Current ground level for trench 3241TT was from 77.47m OD at the northern end to 76.98m OD at the southern.

5.1.3 Natural geology consisted of a firm, greyish-orange silty clay [18] with frequent angular flints and nodules (10mm-80mm) and sandy clay patches throughout. This deposit [18] became greyish green with depth.

5.1.4 Cutting geological deposit [18] were two tree boles [11] and [12] and a pit [8]. The tree boles [11] and [12] were filled with friable greyish brown clayey silt and fine sand with pebbles. Pit [8] was oval in plan 1.39m long, 1.05m wide and 0.10m deep. Only the base of the pit survived, apparently sealed beneath subsoil [2]/[13]. This apparent seal is probably the result of the subsoil [2]/[13] being re-worked by 'ancient' plough action (which has truncated the upper parts of the pit [8]). The pit was filled with firm greyish black silty clay [3] which was probably degraded charcoal. There were also occasional surviving fragments of charcoal and burnt stone inclusions. It appeared that the charcoal was a result of *in-situ* burning within the cut [8].

5.1.5 Subsoil [2]/[13] was 0.21m deep, overlain by topsoil [1] (0.30m deep).

**5.2 Table 1: Trenches without archaeological features**

Trench Number	Geology	Subsoil	Topsoil	Current ground level (m OD)			
				North	South	East	West
3229TT	Yellow grey clay [28]	[27] 0.21m deep	[1] 0.24m deep			81.46	79.71
3230TT	Yellow brown clay [24]	[23] 0.23m deep	[1] 0.32m deep	82.32	81.46		
3231TT	Brown orange silty clay [32]	[31] 0.19m deep	[1] 0.19m deep	82.62	82.31		
3232TT	Orange grey silty clay [26]	[25] 0.30m deep	[1] 0.45m deep	80.93	80.46		
3233TT	Grey yellow clay [30]	[29] 0.20m deep	[1] 0.26m deep			83.88	83.08
3234TT	Grey orange silty clay [22]	[21] 0.40m deep	[1] 0.40m deep	84.02	83.47		
3235TT	Grey yellow flinty clay [20]	[19] 0.19m deep	[1] 0.27m deep			82.64	83.19
3236TT	Grey yellow clay [34]	[33] 0.21m deep	[1] 0.28m deep			81.13	81.85
3237TT	Grey yellow flinty clay [16]	[15] 0.40m deep	[1] 0.40m deep	81.06	80.23		
3238TT	Grey orange silty clay [18]	[17] 0.13m deep	[1] 0.30m deep	82.06	81.44		
3239TT	Grey yellow clay [36], some sand	[35] 0.31m deep	[1] 0.36m deep			79.98	79.39
3240TT	Yellow grey clay [10]	[9] 0.31m deep	[1] 0.36m deep			77.32	79.23
3242TT	Grey yellow clay [40]	[39] 0.23m deep	[1] 0.25m deep			80.69	81.36
3243TT	Grey orange silty clay [38]	[37] 0.31m deep	[1] 0.36m deep			82.89	82.18
3244TT	Yellow grey clay [7]	[6] 0.24m deep	[1] 0.30m deep	84.32	83.69		
3245TT	Yellow grey clay [5]	[4] 0.15m deep	[1] 0.15m deep				83.31

## 6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORIES

### 6.1 Table 2: Events dataset

EVENT_NAME:Leacon Lane
EVENT_CODE:ARC LLA 98
EVENT_TYPE:Evaluation
CONTRACTOR:Museum of London Archaeology Service
DATE:27/07-3/08/1998
GRID:27500N 75575E (CTRL Grid)
PROJECT:CTRL
COUNTY:Kent
DISTRICT:Ashford
PARISH:Charing CP
SMR:
SITE_TYPE:Cultivated Land 3 - Operation to a depth >0.25m
PERIOD:One undated archaeological. Several undated tree boles. A number of modern land drains.
METHOD:Mechanical removal of topsoil; hand excavation and recording of section of archaeological feature.
PHASING:No phasing was possible.
ENVIRON:
FINDS:No finds
GEOLOGY:Folkstone Beds (yellow to light brown sands with iron pan and pockets of pebbles).
CONTEXT_NUM:40
THREAT:CTRL
SAMPLE:1%
SUMMARY:One undated archaeological feature with burnt fill, several tree boles and modern land drains.
ARCHIVE:
ACC_NUM:

## 6.2 Table 3: Archaeological context inventory

TRENCH	CONTEXT	TYPE	PERIOD	ASSOCIATION	COMMENTS
All trenches	1	deposit			topsoil
3241TT	2	deposit			subsoil
3241TT	3	deposit	?	8	fill
3245TT	4	deposit			subsoil
3245TT	5	deposit			natural
3244TT	6	deposit			subsoil
3244TT	7	deposit			natural
3241TT	8	cut		3	cut
3240TT	9	deposit			subsoil
3240TT	10	deposit			natural
3241TT	11	deposit			tree bole?
3241TT	12	deposit			tree bole?
3241TT	13	deposit			subsoil
3241TT	14	deposit			natural
3237TT	15	deposit			subsoil
3237TT	16	deposit			natural
3238TT	17	deposit			subsoil
3238TT	18	deposit			natural
3235TT	19	deposit			subsoil
3235TT	20	deposit			natural
3234TT	21	deposit			subsoil
3234TT	22	deposit			natural
3230TT	23	deposit			subsoil
3230TT	24	deposit			natural
3232TT	25	deposit			subsoil
3232TT	26	deposit			natural
3229TT	27	deposit			subsoil
3229TT	28	deposit			natural
3233TT	29	deposit			subsoil
3233TT	30	deposit			natural
3231TT	31	deposit			subsoil
3231TT	32	deposit			natural
3236TT	33	deposit			subsoil
3236TT	34	deposit			natural
3239TT	35	deposit			subsoil
3239TT	36	deposit			natural
3243TT	37	deposit			subsoil
3243TT	38	deposit			natural
3242TT	39	deposit			subsoil
3242TT	40	deposit			natural

***SECTION 2: STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE***

**7 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 A single archaeological feature was located during the works. It consisted of a pit in 3241TT, which was probably heavily truncated, and of which only the base survived. The pit contained material that appeared to have been burnt *in-situ*. The feature contained no finds and cannot, therefore, be dated; although, as the subsoil sealed it, a modern date does not seem likely.



## **8 IMPORTANCE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS**

### **8.1 Survival and condition**

- 8.1.1 The only archaeological feature located appeared to have been heavily truncated, although this may well have been in 'antiquity'.

### **8.2 Period**

- 8.2.1 No dating evidence was recovered from the single feature or any other contexts.

### **8.3 Rarity**

- 8.3.1 Isolated, undatable features of unknown function are a common occurrence during such fieldwork.

### **8.4 Fragility and vulnerability**

- 8.4.1 Despite the presence of subsoil on the site, it is likely that any archaeological remains at similar depths to the one located would be liable to damage or destruction due to construction activity.

### **8.5 Diversity**

- 8.5.1 Comment on the diversity is inappropriate given the paucity of the remains.

### **8.6 Documentation**

- 8.6.1 No previous fieldwork had been undertaken for the site. Site specific maps were not consulted as part of the works. Desk-based work undertaken during the Environmental Assessment had not highlighted any documentation relevant to the site.

### **8.7 Group value**

- 8.7.1 The site has no group value with other locations in the local area.

### **8.8 Potential**

- 8.8.1 On the basis of the evidence recovered there is no potential for further archaeological work on this site.

**9 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Museum of London, 1994  
*Archaeological Site Manual*

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URL, 1997a, *East of Pluckley Road*  
Archaeological Evaluation (Prepared for URL by MoLAS)

URL, 1997b, *South of Station Road, Parsonage Farm*  
Archaeological Evaluation (Prepared for URL by MoLAS)

## *APPENDIX 1*

Plant remains

*By John Giorgi*

### **Introduction**

One 10 litre bulk sample was taken from a fill [3] 3241TT (sample <1>) during excavations at Leacon Lane (ARC LLA98) for the potential recovery of biological and artefactual remains. No dating evidence was recovered from the fill.

The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the quality of preservation and the abundance and diversity of biological and artefactual remains in the sample. It was hoped that the remains in the samples could throw some light on the date and function of the feature.

### **Methods**

The sample was processed in a flotation tank and the flot recovered on a 0.25 mm mesh. The residue, retained on a 1mm sieve, was dried and sorted for biological and artefactual remains.

The dried flot were scanned under a binocular microscope. Modes of preservation, abundance and diversity of organic remains were noted. A summary of the results is shown below (*environmental dataset*).

### **Results**

*Pitfill [3] 3241TT (sample <1>, flot vol. 300ml.):* The flot contained a large quantity of charcoal with the largest fragments measuring *c.* 20mm. Occasional modern rootlets were also present. The residue also produced a moderate quantity of charcoal within a gravel matrix. No other biological and artefactual remains were recovered from either the flot or residue.

### **Statement of Potential**

The aim of the assessment was to try to establish the possible date and function of the feature. It may be possible to radiocarbon date the pit on the basis of the charcoal in the sample, while the species identification of the larger charcoal fragments may provide evidence on woodland exploitation at the time. The function of the feature however cannot be established on the basis of the charcoal alone.

## Recommendations

The charcoal may provide a date for the feature and possible evidence on woodland exploitation in the area although such information may be of limited value given that the sample was taken from an isolated pit.

**Table 4: Environmental dataset, plant remains**

TRENCH	CONTEXT	SAMPLE	METHOD	SUMMARY	COMMENTS
3241TT	3	1	flotation (flot size 0.25mm)	charcoal+++; rootlets+	dating of feature and possible evidence on woodland exploitation

**Kent SMR Record Sheet**

<b>Site Name:</b> Leacon Lane															
<b>Site code:</b> ARC LLA 98															
<b>Summary:</b>  An evaluation of 17 trenches, commissioned by Union Railways Limited, was carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service in July/August 1998 at Leacon Lane, near Charing, north-west of Ashford, Kent. The evaluation forms part of a larger investigation along the line of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.															
<b>District:</b> Ashford		<b>Parish:</b> Charing CP													
<b>Period(s):</b> 1. One undated archaeological feature.															
NGR Easting 595700		NGR Northing 147500													
<table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Type of Recording:</b></td> <td><b>Evaluation</b></td> <td><del><b>Watching-Brief</b></del></td> <td><del><b>Field-Walking</b></del></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><del><b>Excavation</b></del></td> <td><del><b>Geophysical Survey</b></del></td> <td><del><b>Measured Survey</b></del></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>(Delete)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				<b>Type of Recording:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<del><b>Watching-Brief</b></del>	<del><b>Field-Walking</b></del>		<del><b>Excavation</b></del>	<del><b>Geophysical Survey</b></del>	<del><b>Measured Survey</b></del>		(Delete)		
<b>Type of Recording:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<del><b>Watching-Brief</b></del>	<del><b>Field-Walking</b></del>												
	<del><b>Excavation</b></del>	<del><b>Geophysical Survey</b></del>	<del><b>Measured Survey</b></del>												
	(Delete)														
<b>Date of Recording: (From)</b> 27/07/1998		<b>(To)</b> 3/08/1998													
<b>Unit Undertaking Recording:</b>  Museum of London Archaeology Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB															
<b>Summary of Field Results:</b>  One of the 17 trenches revealed an archaeological feature, an undated pit with a charcoal-rich fill.															
<b>Location of Archive/Finds:</b>		URL archive at Aylesford													
<b>Bibliography:</b>		Evaluation report													

<b>Summary Compiler:</b> Friederike Hammer	<b>Date:</b> 29/09/1998
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