

**Channel Tunnel Rail Link
Union Railways Ltd**

North of Saltwood Tunnel, Kent

ARC SLT 97

Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report

Environmental Statement Route Window No. 37

Contract No. 194/870

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
December 1997**

© UNION RAILWAYS LIMITED, 1997

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 means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Union Railways Limited.

UNION RAILWAYS LTD

NORTH OF SALTWOOD TUNNEL, KENT

ARC SLT 97

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Environmental Statement Route Window No. 37

OS GRID TR 1540 3695

Contract No. 194/870

INTERIM REPORT

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

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

December 1997

NORTH OF SALTWOOD TUNNEL (ARC SLT 97), SALTWOOD, KENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

INTERIM REPORT

Client:	Union Railways Limited
Contractor:	Oxford Archaeological Unit
Parish:	Saltwood
NGR:	TR 1540 3695
Site Area:	4.5 hectares
Periods Represented:	Iron Age Romano-British Modern
Number of Trenches:	16 (30m x 2m)

1 INTRODUCTION

- The evaluation (Figure 1) lies between the M20 and Saltwood railway tunnel. The site is presently grassland grazed by sheep. The geology is sand and clay of the Folkestone Beds and Sandgate Beds (Geological Survey Sheet 305).

2 PREVIOUS WORK

2.1 Desktop assessment

- A watching brief during the construction of the M20 in 1979 produced finds which date from the Neolithic to the medieval period. The Iron Age pottery was dated to *c.* 500-200 BC and probably indicated occupation nearby. The substantial quantity of Roman pottery recovered and the presence of burnt daub indicated occupation in the immediate area. The Roman finds suggested occupation from the late first to late fourth century AD. The site was badly damaged by the motorway construction and only one feature was identified.
- A findspot of a Roman coin has been recorded between Sandy Lane and Saltwood tunnel in 1926 (OAU No.1138).

2.2 Fieldwalking Survey

- The surface collection survey identified a diffuse scatter of both struck flint and burnt unworked flint (27 in total). There were also three middle Iron Age and four Roman pottery sherds (URL 1994 *Union Railways Limited, Channel Tunnel Rail Link: Assessment of Historic and Cultural Effects. Final Report*).

3 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

3.1 Iron Age

- A small number of Iron Age sherds were recovered and a probable Iron Age ditch was noted in Trench 1851TT, although there were no clear signs of Iron Age occupation on the site.

3.2 Roman

- A concentration of Roman features was located in Trenches 1852TT, 1855TT, 1856TT, and 1857TT. The features were mainly ditches within a well defined area towards the centre of the evaluation area, immediately south of the M20 (Figure 1). The linear features clearly continue into the area now occupied by the M20. A late second century AD Roman human cremation and associated vessels was located to the east in Trench 1858TT.
- There was a noticeable density of linear features in 1852TT and the predominant alignment is northwest - southeast suggesting a layout of enclosures/boundaries.
- The pottery from the evaluation falls within a well defined date range in the first century AD. This is in contrast to the material recovered during the 1979 M20 watching brief (Willson 1985, 'A new archaeological site at Saltwood', *Kent Archaeological Review* **80**, 226-35), which ranged from the 1st century to the late 4th century AD. The M20 watching brief identified only one feature (the 'cut out') which contained 4th century material. This might suggest that there are later 'occupation' phases; probably north of the current evaluation site.
- The late 2nd century AD cremation in Trench 1858TT appears to be peripheral to the other features and would be consistent with the Roman tradition of placing cremations away from the main occupation area.
- The site appears to have potential as a relatively well-preserved sample of a rural 1st century AD Roman settlement of a type whose nature is at present poorly understood in Kent. This potential is somewhat offset by the limited extent of the Roman occupation within the Rail Link corridor. It is clear, from the evidence of the M20 watching brief and the presence of a 2nd century AD cremation, that the site probably extends to the north and probably developed from the Iron Age and lasted throughout the Roman period. Since the full extent of the settlement is not understood it is difficult to assess the present findings and their context within the spatial layout of the settlement.
- A total of six pieces of worked struck flint were recovered from the evaluation. They were undiagnostic and all but one piece was associated with Roman pottery.
- Preservation of the charred remains was generally fairly poor and the density of remains is low in all feature types represented.

3.3 Modern

- Disturbance, which is most likely associated with the construction phase of the M20, was evident throughout the western area of the site. Large wheel ruts and compacted deposits were present in Trenches 1856TT and 1857TT. However, the majority of archaeological features were sealed by later ploughsoils and had not been disturbed by modern ploughing. Trenches 1846TT - 1849TT had a thin covering of topsoil probably redeposited following M20 landscaping. The degree of landscaping was illustrated by redeposited sand and soil in Trench 1851TT, which had been dumped to a depth of 1.2m.