

UNION RAILWAYS LTD

**NORTH OF SALTWOOD TUNNEL,
SALTWOOD, KENT**

ARC SLT 97

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

OS GRID TR 1540 3695

Contract No. 194/870

SUMMARY REPORT

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NORTH OF SALTWOOD TUNNEL, SALTWOOD, KENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION - SUMMARY REPORT

The Oxford Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Union Railways Limited to conduct a field evaluation of 4.5ha of land between the M20 and Saltwood railway tunnel (NGR TR 1540 3695), as part of a wider programme of archaeological investigations along the route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

The site is located at on a greensand ridge on the dip slope of the North Downs. Sixteen evaluation trenches were excavated.

The Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit undertook a watching brief during the construction of the M20 in 1979 (Willson 1985). The present evaluation was targeted specifically to investigate an area where Neolithic to Medieval artefacts were recorded in the watching brief. The watching brief recovered Iron Age pottery which dated to *c.* 500-200 BC probably indicating occupation nearby. The presence of Roman pottery (162 sherds) and burnt daub indicated occupation in the immediate area, which may range from the late 1st to late 4th century AD. The site was badly damaged by the motorway construction and only one feature was identified.

The present evaluation located a concentration of Roman features within a well defined area immediately south of the M20. The features comprised mainly ditches with several pits, and a linear 'hollow'. The linear features clearly continued into the area now occupied by the M20. The predominant alignment of the ditches was north-west to south-east suggesting a layout of enclosures/boundaries and the pottery was predominantly 1st-century in date. A 2nd-century Roman human cremation occurred at the eastern boundary of the Roman activity. The cremation vessel was accompanied by three ancillary vessels, including a Central Gaulish samian bowl Drag 31 (AD 160-200). A single Iron Age ditch and a small number of Iron Age sherds were also recorded, but no other archaeological features found.

The Roman pottery from the evaluation fell within a well defined date range in the 1st century AD. The pottery from a linear 'hollow' was slightly later in date and probably contemporary with the late 2nd-century human cremation. The evaluation identified the southern limits of an early phase of the 1st-century settlement. A full understanding of the site is somewhat countered by the limited extent of the Roman occupation within the Rail Link corridor.

References:

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| Willson J | 1985 | <i>A New Archaeological Site at Saltwood, Kent
Archaeological Review</i> 80 , 226-35 |
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