

**Channel Tunnel Rail Link
Union Railways (South) Ltd**

Project Area 440

**NORTH OF
SALTWOOD TUNNEL
KENT**

ARC SLT 98/98c/99

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
DRAFT INTERIM REPORT**

Contract S/400/SP/0009/P484*

**Canterbury Archaeological Trust
October 2000**

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ARC SLT 98/98c/99**

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DRAFT INTERIM REPORT**

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LAND TO THE NORTH OF SALTWOOD TUNNEL:

ARC SLT 98 SETTLEMENT AREA

ARC SLT 99 CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AREA

ARC SLT 98C CEMETERY AREA

1 SUMMAERY OF RESULTS

1.1 Site Background (Figures 1 and 2)

- 1.1.1 This report details the further archaeological works undertaken by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust on the land to the north of Saltwood Tunnel. These works are seen as direct continuations of the previous archaeological excavations carried out in this area, referred to as SLT 98 (Settlement area), SLT 99 (Central and Southern areas), and SLT 98C (Cemetery area). Hence this report forms an additional appendix to the previous reports on these detailed archaeological works
- 1.1.2 A total of six areas were stripped of overlying soils down to the archaeological horizon, where any subsequent archaeological deposits were recorded and excavated under watching brief conditions. Five of these areas are zones surrounding the ventilation shafts from the underlying tunnel (shafts 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6); the sixth area is to the north of shaft 1 and is referred to as the Western Area. The Western Area falls to the south of SLT 98, and is hence given this site code. Shafts 2, 3, 4, and 5 are within the area of the excavation SLT 99, whilst the area surrounding Shaft 6 is seen as a southerly continuation of SLT 98C.
- 1.1.3 An additional archaeological watching brief was also undertaken along the route of a new water utility in the field to the south of shafts 5 and 6. This was recorded under the site code of SLT 98C.

1.2 Site Summary

- 1.2.1 Principle features identified in this phase of archaeological works included a continuation to the Iron Age/Roman hollow way complex to the west and south of the settlement area SLT 98 (Figure 3). Three inhumation burials with associated pennanular ditches were excavated in the area around shaft 4, part of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery recorded in the southern area of SLT 99 (Figure 4). A southerly continuation of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery – in the SLT 98C cemetery area - was also recorded around shaft 6 (Figure 5), here a further 34 inhumation burials were excavated, including two high status “princely” burials. The investigation in the area around shaft 6 also identified several pits including some potential cremations, a large posthole complex, and a number of linear features.
- 1.2.2 No archaeological features were identified in the areas around shafts 2, 3, and 5. Similarly there was no evidence for the presence of archaeological features in the trench excavated along the route of the new water utility – however it cannot be dismissed that archaeological remains are present in this field.

Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age

- 1.2.3 Activity dated this period, *circa* 900 – 600 BC, was limited to the area-surrounding shaft 6 (SLT 98C).
- 1.2.4 A large posthole complex, consisting of over fifty separate postholes, was present in the eastern half of this area. It is unclear whether this represents one large rectangular structure (approximately 30m by 10m), or two smaller structures (both approximately 14m by 10m), aligned slightly off the north-south axis parallel with the current alignment of the Bridleway (also known as Castle Road).
- 1.2.5 A small alignment of possible cremations was also present, consisting of five evenly spaced features. It is unclear whether their interpretation as cremations is correct; although a high percentage of pottery and charcoal was present no burnt bone was noted in the infill during excavation. Further analysis of environmental samples maybe more informative. Another isolated cremation/refuse pit was present in the strip between shafts 5 and 6, again true function remains unclear and in this case the pottery present may suggest an earlier Mid Bronze Age date c.1700 – 1500BC.
- 1.2.6 Two large circular pits, possibly functioning as refuse disposal pits, were also identified in the area surrounding shaft 6. Both of these features had diameters exceeding 2.5m, and depths greater than 1.5m. The multiple layers infilling these pits contained a high concentration of pottery, charcoal, and seed remains. Again further analysis of the environmental samples will yield more information about these features – similar features have been recorded on the eastern side of the bridleway excavated by Wessex Archaeology (site code SFB 98).

Iron Age / Roman

- 1.2.7 Stripping of the western area (SLT 98) exposed a large area of infill, presumably the result of the silting of a large erosion feature at the head of a combe that leads sharply down to the Slay Brook. Only the southern edge of this feature was identified, the northern edge was not exposed but at it's greatest the width would have exceeded 30m, the western limits have been removed by the railway cutting. The southern edge of this feature is a continuation of the northeast to southwest hollow-way recorded during the SLT 98 (settlement area) excavation. Several ditches area recorded as truncating this feature, and following the same alignment as it's southern edge. Another ditch is also recorded in a perpendicular alignment, along with a curvilinear feature, however only a limited excavation was carried out in this area and these features are therefore poorly understood.
- 1.2.8 A cremation recorded directly to the north of shaft 6 (SLT 98C), has also been assigned a Roman-British date of *c.*50BC – 74AD. However the upper fill of this feature contained a fairly complete shattered pottery vessel of Late Bronze Age/Iron Age date, with the primary lower fill containing the Roman pottery – this does place a question mark over the other features dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age period.

Anglo-Saxon

- 1.2.9 Three inhumation burials were recorded around shaft 4, showing a continuation of the SLT 99 burial area eastwards. All three had associated pennanular ditches with breaks, or entrances, on the eastern sides. These burials (including the previously excavated grave 143) form a distinct group showing a change in burial practice from the rest of the SLT 99 graveyard.
- 1.2.10 The burials themselves were aligned east to west. Human remains, where present, indicated that the occupants were laid with the head to the west. No skeletal remains were present in grave 172, whilst grave 173 contained only teeth enamel. The skeleton in grave 174 was fairly well preserved, although the bone was soft, here the skull showed a clear trauma wound to the forehead.
- 1.2.11 Grave goods were present in all three burials, including glass beads in grave 172, a small iron blade in grave 173, and a spearhead in grave 174. Residual Roman pottery was present within the fills of the pennanular ditches.
- 1.2.12 The SLT 98C cemetery was seen to continue in a southerly direction across the area surrounding shaft 6. In this area a further 34 features were excavated as burials, however at least six of these are no longer thought to be burials – and a total of 15 features were found to contain no evidence for human remains, grave goods, or coffin structures.
- 1.2.13 There was some variety in burial practice evident, but all of the graves were aligned roughly east to west – perpendicular with the current alignment of the bridleway. Eight of the burials had associated complete or incomplete pennanular ditches (graves 175, 176, 181, 186, 193, 195, 204, and 205), there was one probable cist burial (176), four had partial stone linings (171, 176, 199, and 204), evidence for coffins were found in seven burials (171, 177, 181, 185, 190, 196, and 200).
- 1.2.14 Two large high status “princely” burials (190 and 200) present can be seen to continue an evenly spaced alignment with the “princely” burials previously excavated to the north. This alignment is slightly off the north-south axis and is parallel with the current line of the bridleway, only three burials are seen to exceed this line to the west and it is speculated that these are part of a group of burials that encircle grave 190. The majority of the rest of the burials all fall within a band no wider than 15m to the east of the “princely” graves, those outside this band are empty and may not necessarily be burials. This band is most likely to extend further to the south, beyond the limit of the current archaeological works, as evident by two more partially exposed pennanular ditches.
- 1.2.15 Grave goods were found in 18 burials, most of these were iron objects; those identified include weapons such as knives and spearheads. Other artefacts identified include copper alloy pins, belt buckles, and finger rings, glass beads, and one complete pottery vessel. Of the high status “princely” graves, burial 190, contained a gold brooch, two gold pendants (one of which was a modified Roman coin), jewellery consisting of stones with silver mounts, and glass beads. No weaponry was found in this grave and it is postulated that this

was a female burial. On the other hand grave 200 contained no jewellery but several weapons including a sword, spearhead, angon, and three shield studs and bosses. Grave 200 also contained a copper alloy “Coptic” bowl; both 190 and 200 contained the remains of buckets.

- 1.2.16 As has been seen elsewhere the skeletal material present was invariable in a poor state. Of the burials present 15 contained human remains but in most cases only teeth enamel was seen to survive, or parts of the crania and long bones. There was however better preservation in graves 171, 185, and 186; here there was partial survival of the crania, pelvis, ribs, spine, long bones, and feet bones. Grave 186 was that of an infant, whilst 185 is thought to have been the grave of a juvenile, other empty graves were thought to be too small to have contained adults. The positioning of the human remains suggests that the occupants were laid with their heads to west, the only possible exception being burial 181.

Undated features

- 1.2.17 Four intermittent linear features, aligned northwest to southeast, were recorded in the area of shaft 6 (SLT 98C). These remain undated, but are seen as being truncated by some of the Anglo-Saxon burials. Features of a similar alignment are recorded to the west in the SLT 99 (central area) excavation – here dated as Medieval – and to the west in the SFB 98 excavation – here dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age.
- 1.2.18 An intermittent linear ditch was recorded running along the eastern limit of the excavation in the SLT 98C area. This forms a parallel alignment with the bridleway, and is undoubtedly associated with an earlier phase. It is most likely that the bridleway overlies an earlier track or route-way, and may have possibly originated as a prehistoric erosion feature such as a hollow-way, and has hence been a feature in the landscape through to the present.