

**CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK  
Union Railways (South) Ltd**

**Project Area 420**

**SOUTH OF SNARKHURST WOOD, HOLLINGBOURNE, KENT  
ARC SNK 99**

**STRIP, MAP AND SAMPLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS  
INTERIM REPORT  
FINAL**

**Contract S/400/SP/0009 P482A**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit  
31<sup>st</sup> August 1999**

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<b>Prepared By:</b> <b>Date:</b>	
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**Contract S/400/SP/0009 P482A**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Location and specification**

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to undertake detailed archaeological investigation at the site of South of Snarkhurst Wood, Hollingbourne, Kent. This work formed part of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation carried out in advance of the construction of the CTRL.

1.1.2 The site is centred on URL grid point 62280E 35170N and NGR grid point TQ58227 45517. The site, which was specified as strip, map and sample, was excavated as two separate areas and is *c.* 1.36 hectares in extent.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 The site lies close to the foot of the North Downs escarpment, between the villages of Hollingbourne, Eyhorne Street and Bearsted. The geology consists of Folkestone Sand Beds. Just to the north of the CTRL corridor the Folkestone Beds are overlain by Gault Clay. The site lies between the M20 Motorway (near Junction 8), the Maidstone to Ashford Railway and Snarkhurst Wood. A balancing pond, lying between the two excavated areas, occupies most of the width of the rail link trace in the central part of the site, and a culverted stream crosses the site in the same area. The land is undulating, ranging from *c.* 57 m OD at the western end of the site to *c.* 63.5 m at the eastern end.

### **1.3 Background**

1.3.1 The potential for Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity in the vicinity was highlighted at the desk-top assessment stage of the rail link investigations. Discoveries during construction of the Maidstone by-pass (now the M20) in the 1950's uncovered evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. Finds included ditches and burial urns to the north of the road, and a small Ragstone building and a kiln to the south.

1.3.2 Work conducted for the CTRL on the site has included a surface collection survey. A flint scatter was identified at the intersection of the motorway and railway, at the west end of the site, and a scatter of late Iron Age and early Roman material was recovered from the vicinity of the balancing pond.

1.3.3 Evaluation and subsequent excavations at the Maidstone Motorway Service Area, immediately to the north of the CTRL corridor, recovered evidence for a probable late Bronze Age settlement. However the evaluation of the CTRL trace, carried out by the OAU in 1995, produced only residual pottery of this date. Most of the features identified were of late Iron Age/ early Romano-British date and were interpreted as the northern edge of the settlement identified during construction of the Maidstone By-pass (*Land South of Snarkhurst Wood, Hollingbourne, Kent. Archaeological Evaluation, Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Oxford Archaeological Unit, for Union Railways Ltd, 1995*).

## **2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

### **2.1 Site Summary**

- 2.1.1 The site was excavated in two parts (Areas A and B): The eastern part (Area A) produced evidence for a settlement of late Iron Age and early Roman date (1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD). Features included rectangular and sub-rectangular enclosure ditches and several post-hole structures, including one small, circular building with a central post, and five four-posters. Other evidence for occupation included a small kiln or furnace associated with metal-working slag, and several storage or rubbish pits. Burial evidence was restricted to a single cremation. The settlement is likely to be a continuation of the site identified during construction of the Maidstone by-pass in the 1950's. The features were overlain by elements of the post-medieval field system and a possible trackway. Features to the west of the main post-medieval boundary were very severely truncated by ploughing, which seems to have entirely removed all but the deepest Iron Age features.
- 2.1.2 The western part of the site (Area B) produced a scatter of prehistoric worked flints, including several characteristic early Bronze Age pieces, from the stripped surface and tree-throw hollows. Their location coincides broadly with a scatter recovered from the ploughsoil during the surface collection survey. No definite archaeological features were identified in this area, although a series of irregular linear soil marks may be field boundaries of indeterminate date, and a single possible pit was identified.

### **2.2 Periods Represented**

#### *Early Bronze Age (c.1750 – 1150 BC)*

- 2.2.1 Early Bronze Age activity is represented by a flint scatter in Area B, mostly recovered from the ploughsoil. There was no evidence for later Bronze Age activity on the site, in spite of the proximity of Area A to the probable Bronze Age settlement identified immediately to the north, under the Motorway Service Area.

#### *Late Iron Age/ early Roman (c.100 BC – 200 AD)*

- 2.2.2 The majority of archaeological features are believed, on present evidence, to be of late Iron Age or early Roman date (1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD). The pottery assemblage consists almost entirely of late Iron Age coarsewares, although a few Roman sherds are also present.

#### *Post-medieval/ modern (c.1500 – present)*

- 2.2.3 Post-medieval field boundaries and a trackway overlie the late Iron Age settlement in Area A.

### **2.3 Feature Types**

- 2.3.1 The only deposits surviving were plough-truncated subsoil features. They included enclosure boundary ditches, post-holes forming one circular and five four-post structures, and several storage or rubbish pits. A small kiln or furnace, which seems to have been used for metal-working, was also located.
- 2.3.2 Features to the west of the main post-medieval boundary were very severely truncated by ploughing, which seems to have entirely removed most of the Iron Age features in that area, although one deeper pit remained.

## **2.4 Artefactual Remains**

- 2.4.1 Worked and burnt flint (*c.* 138 pieces) included a concentration at the western end of the site, in broadly the same area as a scatter identified by the surface collection survey. This material included several characteristic early Bronze Age pieces, including a plano-convex knife, a backed knife and a piercer. The remainder of the flint is likely to be residual in Iron Age and Roman contexts or unstratified. One interesting find was an opposed platform bladelet core of possible Mesolithic date.
- 2.4.2 Pottery included an estimated 1882 sherds, predominantly of late Iron Age or early Roman date. The assemblage is dominated by late Iron Age coarsewares, with only a few Romanised sherds.
- 2.4.3 A small assemblage of metalwork was recovered, including a single, as yet unidentified, copper alloy object.
- 2.4.4 Burnt human bone was recovered from a single cremation deposit.
- 2.4.5 A small assemblage of animal bone, in a variable state of preservation, comprised *c.* 598 fragments.
- 2.4.6 The slag and fired clay recovered was mostly associated with a small kiln or furnace.
- 2.4.7 Post-medieval finds include glass and ceramic building material.

## **2.5 Palaeo-environmental and Economic Evidence**

- 2.5.1 Limited palaeo-environmental sampling was undertaken (27 samples from 26 contexts). The sampling strategy was designed to recover charred material from a range of feature and structure types, where possible from contexts with large ceramic groups. Intensive sampling was restricted to deposits associated with the single cremation and the small kiln or furnace.

## **3 FIELDWORK EVENT AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the fieldwork event were as follows:
- To determine the morphology and function of the periphery of the late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement, including any adjacent trackways etc, in relation to the remains identified during the 1950's.
  - To recover artefact assemblages and other economic indicators, including carbonised plant remains and animal bone, to refine understanding of the development of the settlement.
  - To establish the plan and relationship of any Bronze Age features to the remains identified in the motorway service area to the north.
- 3.2 The investigation has addressed all of the fieldwork aims, except that no clear evidence for Bronze Age occupation has been found within the CTRL trace. The findings were otherwise as anticipated by the Written Scheme of Investigation.

- 3.3 Understanding of the settlement morphology is limited at present by the comparatively small area exposed. The picture may become clearer when the evidence is compared directly with the evidence excavated on the line of the M20 Motorway in the 1950's. A range of well-defined post-hole structures is present, dominated by four-post structures. Other features suggestive of settlement occupation include pits and enclosure boundary ditches. Small scale industrial activity is represented by a small kiln or furnace, associated with probable smithing slag, whose size suggests metal-working on a very small scale, perhaps by an itinerant craftsman.
- 3.4 The potential of the environmental and economic indicators has yet to be assessed. The animal bone assemblage from the site is small, and therefore has limited potential for further study, although assessment may indicate useful points of comparison with the early Iron Age settlement at White Horse Stone or the contemporary Thurnham Iron Age settlement and Roman Villa. The charred plant remains may be expected to provide some insight into the arable economy, although the contexts were generally not charcoal-rich.
- 3.5 There is clear evidence for settlement occupation on the site within the period 100 BC – 100 AD. Further assessment of the pottery is required to establish when the site was first occupied, and how far into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century it continued. Although most of the pottery recovered could be of pre-conquest date, there is certainly some post-conquest material, and the Maidstone by-pass excavations suggest that the site was occupied into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Establishing the lifespan of this settlement and other contemporary sites excavated along the rail link route, will be of crucial importance for understanding the complex changes in the rural settlement pattern that occurred in the late Iron Age and early Roman periods. At present it is difficult to determine whether the apparent abandonment of large numbers of late Iron Age rural settlements during the early Roman period is related to the rise of the villas and towns in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, or is an early manifestation of the widespread evidence for later Roman settlement retraction, observed in most classes of archaeological site from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD onwards.
- 3.6 Archival material from the 1950's excavation will need to be assessed, to establish whether reappraisal of the evidence in the light of the new discoveries is required.

#### **4 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL**

- 4.1 In terms of addressing the research aims of the project, the site is of particular relevance to the Wealden Greensand landscape zone in the period 'Towns and their rural landscapes' (sub-period 100 BC – 410 AD). The CTRL excavations of the Waterloo Connection Roman Cemetery and Thurnham Roman Villa have tended to continue the perceived bias towards investigation of spectacular Late Iron Age and Roman sites. The Snarkhurst Wood site, as an example of a low status rural settlement, has clear potential for redressing the balance. This site is likely to be more representative of Kentish rural settlement of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD than villa sites such as Thurnham.
- 4.2 A key research objective will be to establish the lifetime of the settlement, in particular through studies of the pottery assemblage. Other objectives will be to identify artefactual and morphological characteristics that distinguish low status from high status sites, and rural from urban sites. The related question of why some

late Iron Age rural settlements developed into villas while others did not, may also be addressed.

- 4.3 The proximity of the site to the contemporary villa at Thurnham enhances its group value. To address the above aims it will necessary to draw explicit comparisons with a variety of broadly contemporary sites in the region, including Thurnham Villa and the Waterloo Connection Cemetery. Areas for comparison and contrast will include the form, range and date of buildings, enclosures, burials, artefacts and environmental/ economic indicators. Specific features at South of Snarkhurst Wood with potential for intersite comparison include the kiln or furnace, the single cremation and the post-hole structures. This approach may be expected to shed light on the chronological, social and economic relationships between such rural settlements and more obviously 'Romanised' sites in the region. Comparisons may also be drawn with the early Iron Age settlement at White Horse Stone, which has a number of similarities, such as the predominance of four-post structures, and may provide evidence for continuity and change in the later prehistoric period.

## APPENDIX 1

## ARCHIVE INDEX

ITEM	NUMBER OF ITEMS	NUMBER OF FRAGMENTS	CONDITION (No. of items) (W=washed; UW=unwashed; M=marked; P=processed; UP=unprocessed; D=digitised; I=indexed)
Contexts records	352		
A1 plans	13		
A4 plans	5		
A1 sections	0		
A4 sections	44		
Small finds	21		
Films (monochrome) S=slide; PR=print	8		
Films (Colour) S=slide; PR=print	8		
Flint (boxes)	2 size 3	138	W,M
Pottery (boxes)	2 size 1 1 size 2	1,882	W,M
Fired clay (boxes)	1 size 3	388	W,M
CBM (boxes)	1 size 3	25	W,M
Stone (boxes)	1 size 4	30	W,M
Metalwork (boxes)	1 plastic size 8	12	
Glass (boxes)	1 size 4	2	W,M
Slag (boxes)	1 size 2 1 size 3	489	
Human Bone (boxes)	1 size 4		W,M
Animal Bone (boxes)	1 size 4	598	W,M
Misc.			
Soil Samples (No.)	29		P
Soil Samples (bags/tubs)	94		see above
Soil Samples (Monolith/kubienna tin)			

**Key to box sizes**

## Cardboard boxes

Size 1 = Bulk box	391mm x 238mm x 210mm
Size 2 = Half box	391mm x 238mm x 100mm
Size 3 = Quarter box	386mm x 108 mm x 100mm
Size 4 = Eighth box	213 mm x 102 mm x 80 mm
Size 5 = Sixteenth box	110mm x 88 mm x 60 mm
Size 6 = Skeleton box	600 mm x 241 mm x 225 mm

## Plastic boxes

Size 4 = Small	(dimensions as size 4 cardboard)
Size 8 = Medium	260mm x 184mm x 108mm
Size 9 = Large	308mm x 216mm x 144mm



**APPENDIX 2****SUMMARY REPORT**

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The site is centred on URL grid point 62280E 35170N and NGR grid point TQ58227 45517. The site, which was specified as strip, map and sample, was excavated between 22<sup>nd</sup> January and 17<sup>th</sup> February 1999.

The site was excavated in two parts (Areas A and B): The eastern part (Area A) produced evidence for a settlement of late Iron Age and early Roman date (1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD). Features included rectangular and sub-rectangular enclosure ditches and several post-hole structures, including one small, circular building with a central post, and five four-posters. Other evidence for occupation included a small kiln or furnace associated with metal-working slag, and several storage or rubbish pits. Burial evidence was restricted to a single cremation. The settlement is likely to be a continuation of the site identified during construction of the Maidstone by-pass in the 1950's. The features were overlain by elements of the post-medieval field system and a possible trackway. Features to the west of the main post-medieval boundary were very severely truncated by ploughing, which seems to have entirely removed all but the deepest Iron Age features.

The western part of the site (Area B) produced a small scatter of worked flints from tree-throw hollows and the stripped surface, including several characteristic early Bronze Age pieces (a plano-convex knife, a backed knife and a piercer). Other flints include a bladelet core of possible Mesolithic date, also from Area B. The location of the flints coincides broadly with a scatter recovered from the ploughsoil during the surface collection survey. No definite archaeological features were identified in this area, although a series of irregular linear soil marks may be field boundaries of indeterminate date, and a single possible pit was identified.

## APPENDIX 3

## SMR SHEET

<b>Site Name:</b> South of Snarkhurst Wood, Hollingbourne, Kent	
<b>Summary:</b> The excavation revealed an early Bronze Age worked flint scatter at the western end of the site. Part of a late Iron Age/ early Roman settlement site (a continuation of a settlement discovered during construction of the Maidstone by-pass in 1958) was excavated at the eastern end of the site.	
<b>District:</b> Maidstone	<b>Parish:</b> Hollingbourne
<b>Period(s):</b>	
1. Early Bronze Age	3. Post-medieval
2. Late Iron Age/ early Romano-British	
<b>NGR Easting:</b> TQ58227	<b>NGR Northing:</b> 45517
<b>Type of Recording:</b>	<del>Evaluation</del> <del>Watching — Brief</del> <del>Field Walking</del>
(Delete)      Excavation	<del>Geophysical Survey</del> <del>Measured Survey</del>
<b>Date of Recording:</b> (From) 22/01/99	(To) 17/02/99
<b>Unit Undertaking Recording:</b> Oxford Archaeological Unit	
<p><b>Summary of Fieldwork Results:</b> OAU was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to undertake detailed archaeological investigation at the site of South of Snarkhurst Wood, Hollingbourne, Kent. This work formed part of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation carried out in advance of the construction of the CTRL. The site is centred on URL grid point 62280E 35170N and NGR grid point TQ58227 45517. The site, which was specified as strip, map and sample, was excavated between 22<sup>nd</sup> January and 17<sup>th</sup> February 1999. The site was excavated in two parts (Areas A and B): The eastern part (Area A) produced evidence for a settlement of late Iron Age and early Roman date (1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD). Features included rectangular and sub-rectangular enclosure ditches and several post-hole structures, including one small, circular building with a central post, and five four-posters. Other evidence for occupation included a small kiln or furnace associated with metal-working slag, and several storage or rubbish pits. Burial evidence was restricted to a single cremation. The settlement is likely to be a continuation of the site identified during construction of the Maidstone by-pass in the 1950's. The features were overlain by elements of the post-medieval field system and a possible trackway. Features to the west of the main post-medieval boundary were very severely truncated by ploughing, which seems to have entirely removed all but the deepest Iron Age features. The western part of the site (Area B) produced a small scatter of worked flints from tree-throw hollows and the stripped surface, including several characteristic early Bronze Age pieces (a plano-convex knife, a backed knife and a piercer). Other flints include a bladelet core of possible mesolithic date, also from Area B. The location of the flints coincides broadly with a scatter recovered from the ploughsoil during the surface collection survey. No definite archaeological features were identified in this area, although a series of irregular linear soil marks may be field boundaries of indeterminate date, and a single possible pit was identified.</p>	
<b>Location of Archive / Finds:</b>	
<b>Bibliography:</b>	
<b>Summary Compiler:</b> Stuart Foreman	<b>Date:</b> 27/7/99