CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK UNION RAILWAYS (SOUTH) LIMITED

Archaeological Excavation at Stone Street West (ARC SST99), nr Westenhanger, Kent Environmental Statement Route Window 36

FINAL INTERIM REPORT

Contract Area 440 Contract no. URS/400/ARC/0001 WA Report no. 45994c

Wessex Archaeology

26th July 2002

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Volume 1 of 1

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Contents

1	1.1 1.2	INTRODUCTION Project Background Site Description, Archaeology, Topography, Geology and Hydrography	1 1 1
2	2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4	SUMMARY OF RESULTS	3 3 4 4 4
3	3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4	CONCLUSIONS Extent of Archaeological Remains Nature of Archaeological Remains Character of the Site Site Chronology Introduction Devensian/ Post-Devensian (<u>c</u> . 110000 – 9000 BP) Early Holocene (c. 10000 – 1100 BC) Mid Holocene (c. 1100 BC – AD 410) Post-medieval (AD 1800 onwards)	5 555556666
4	4.1 4.2 4.3	IMPORTANCE OF REMAINS Scheduled Monument Criteria Potential Structural Artefactual Environmental Discussion	7 777777777777
5		BIBLIOGRAPHY	9
6		ARCHIVE INDEX 1	0
7		SUMMARY REPORT 1	1
8		KENT SMR RECORD SHEET 1	2

Figures

Figure 1:	Site location plan
Figure 2:	Trench 3581TT location
Figure 3:	Geology map
Figure 4:	Trench 3581TT north-west facing section

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to investigate alluvial deposits at Fairmead Farm, Westenhanger (centred on URL grid point 92750 17350; NGR grid point TR 12747 37351; Figure 1). The site is known as Stone Street West (under the URS site code ARC SST99) and within Contract Area 440.
- 1.1.2 This work formed part of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation carried out in advance of the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL). At Stone Street West this work was preceded by an environmental assessment (URL 1994) carried out by Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) and evaluation carried out by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT). The archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (URS 1998) was prepared by Rail Link Engineering (RLE), agreed in consultation with English Heritage and Kent County Council, acting on behalf of the Local Planning Authorities.
- 1.1.3 The evaluation (ARC SST98) revealed little archaeological evidence to suggest activity predating the post-medieval period, with only six archaeological features recorded and few datable remains (URS 1999a). However, detailed examination of the subsurface alluvial deposits in trench 3617TT, carried out on behalf of CAT by Wessex Archaeology (URS 1999b), identified a sequence with potentially distinct 'marker-event' characteristics, including peat and peat-like formation at differing periods during the developmental sequence.
- 1.1.4 Although undated, a number of viable interpretations for the nature and date of the alluvial deposits could be made, suggesting that the sequence may have originated during the early Holocene (*op. cit.*). As a result of these findings, RLE commissioned the detailed works reported below.
- 1.1.5 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with a written *Agreement for the Provision of Archaeological Services* (URS 1999c), which defined the scope, aims and generic methods for the CTRL project as a whole, but not this specific excavation, designated as a 'Detailed Excavation' investigation.
- 1.1.6 The fieldwork was carried out between February 5th and February 7th 2001.

1.2 Site Description, Archaeology, Topography, Geology and Hydrography

- 1.2.1 The investigation area was situated to the south-east of Fairmead Farm, in land bordered by the farm access track to the north, Stone Street to the east and the East Stour River and Ashford to Folkestone railway to the south (**Figure 1**). The investigation comprised a single stepped square trench (trench 3581TT); located to investigate the alluvial deposits previously identified. The trench measured *c*. 5m along each side, and was centred on URL grid co-ordinate 92654 17379 (OS NGR TR 12651 37380; **Figure 2**).
- 1.2.2 The environmental assessment (URL 1994) identified a number of archaeological and other remains within the area. These included Stone Street itself (OAU ref. no. 1100), which follows the line of the Roman road from Lympne to Canterbury. Place-name evidence, suggesting the presence of a deserted medieval village (OAU ref. no. 1096) to the west of the site, may be associated with amorphous earthworks (OAU ref. no. 1171) in the same area. More recent remains include Westenhanger railway station (OAU ref. no. 252) and Stanford House (OAU ref. no. 254), both 19th century constructions.

- 1.2.3 Topographically, the site is level at a height of c. 70 72m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), located on the north side of the East Stour River floodplain.
- 1.2.4 The mapped drift geology for the site is relatively complex (**Figure 3**), dominated by Pleistocene Head Brickearth, with more recent alluvium associated with the course of the East Stour River mapped along its course. These drift deposits overly solid geology comprising Cretaceous Lower Greensand Folkestone and Sandgate Beds (Ordnance Survey 1974).
- 1.2.5 As noted above, the site is located on the north side of the East Stour River. The river springs from the Gault Clay/ Lower Chalk interface as a series of converging streams at the base of the North Downs escarpment *c*. 2.5km to the north-east.

2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

2.1 Stratigraphy

2.1.1 Approximately 1.3m of alluvial material was recorded and sampled as *in situ* deposits using two overlapping monoliths within trench 3581TT (**Figure 4**). The section was described in the field, augmented by laboratory-based sedimentological descriptions made from the monoliths. Descriptions follow the terminology outlined by Hodgson (1976) and these allow interpretation of sedimentary history. Where possible, these deposits have been correlated with those identified in trench 3617TT during the preceding CAT evaluation (URS 1999b).

Context	Depth	Surface height	Description		
-	c. 300mm?	c. 71.090m aOD	Topsoil – stripped prior to fieldwork.		
			Equivalent to 361701.		
358101	0-290mm	70.790m aOD	Disturbed sediment – description of structure and morphology not		
			possible. Brown (10YR 5/3) silt clay.		
			Probably the result of plant movement during stripping.		
			Equivalent to layer 361702.		
358102	290-440mm	70.500m aOD	Dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) humic inclusions (up to 30mm) within a matrix of structureless greyish brown (10YR 5/2) firm silty clay with fine, distinct strong brown (5YR 5/6) mottles, with common fine fleshy roots and clear boundary. A hetrogeneous mixed horizon, probably representing a mixed		
			gleyed overbank floodplain alluvium and topsoil.		
358103	440-810mm	70.350m aOD	Light brownish grey (10YR 6/1) moist silty clay becoming greyer (grey – 10YR 6/1) with depth, with massive at top grading to moderate to weak medium subangular to blocky structure, common 5% distinct mottles of reddish yellow (7.5YR 6/6) following root channel voids and other palaeo-laminations. Clear boundary. A gleyed overbank floodplain alluvium. Equivalent to layer 361703.		
358104	810-920mm	69.980m aOD	Dark grey (10YR 4/1) possibly humic, silty clay with fine		
			columnar structure, common fine macropores and diffuse strong brown (10YR 5/6) mottles, very rare and fine manganese flecks. Clear boundary. A stabilisation / stasis horizon. Equivalent to layer 361704.		
358105	920-1000mm	69.870m aOD	Grey (10YR 6/1) firm massive clay with rare/occasional fine macropores, common (10%) strong brown (10YR 5/6) mottles similar to 358103 above, rare medium flint gravel. Alluvium.		
358105	1000-1230mm	68.790m aOD	Grey (10YR 6/1) firm massive clay, abundant (15%) strong brown (10YR 5/6) mottles becoming more distinct and abundant with depth with distinct sandy iron concretions at depth, rare medium flint gravel – more common at depth. Alluvium.		
358106	1230-1300mm	68.560m aOD	Grey (10YR 6/1) and strong brown (10YR 5/6) firm massive clay matrix with flint gravel, some organic matter noted in the field. Gravel. Equivalent to layer 361706.		

Table 1: Sediment description from trench 3581TT

2.1.2 The descriptions below therefore incorporate both archaeological field notation (recording the wider exposed envelope) with the more detailed sediment descriptions made from the relatively narrow (50mm wide) undisturbed sample in monoliths. The sampled material represents the full Holocene sequence at Stone Street West, with the exception of modern topsoil, which had been stripped from the area prior to the commencement of this fieldwork.

Where positive identification can be made, deposits are related to the previous sequence examined in 1998 (URS 1999b).

2.2 Structural Report

2.2.1 No archaeological features were recorded during this investigation, although the fluvial deposits recorded towards the base of the sequence are probably indicative of the former course of a palaeochannel.

2.3 Artefactual Report

2.3.1 No artefacts were recovered during this investigation.

2.4 Environmental Report

2.4.1 No ecofacts were recovered during this investigation.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Extent of Archaeological Remains

- 3.1.1 No archaeological features were recorded during this investigation, although trench 3581TT may be located within a former palaeochannel. Previous work in the area (URS 1998a) demonstrated a small number of archaeological features predominantly located within the zone either side of Stone Street. All were cut from the upper surface of the alluvial sequence described above, and sealed by topsoil.
- 3.1.2 The depositional sequence recorded in detail in trench 3581TT, or key elements of it, was noted throughout the area to the west of Stone Street during the preceding evaluation (URS 1998a).

3.2 Nature of Archaeological Remains

- 3.2.1 The alluvial sequence above the basal (?Devensian) gravel, provides a typical Holocene alluvial sequence. The majority of the sediments probably represent floodplain or saltmarsh along the East Stour River. Alluviation comprises stonefree silty clays with clear evidence of gleying. Alluviation ceased long enough to enable soil formation and inundation was then rapid-enough to seal and retain this as a distinct horizon. Occupation and activity may have occurred seasonally throughout the alluviation as seen elsewhere (e.g. Avon Levels, North Kent coastal plain), but the stasis horizon provides a greater potential for occupation (temporary, seasonal or semi-permanent) than the rest of the Holocene alluvial sequence.
- 3.2.2 No archaeological features were recorded during this investigation, although the fluvial deposits recorded towards the base of the alluvial sequence may be indicative of the course of a former palaeochannel. Archaeological remains recorded during the preceding evaluation (URS 1998a) predominantly comprised post-medieval linear features (i.e. ditches and gullies), either parallel with or perpendicular to Stone Street itself. Three post-medieval pits were also noted.

3.3 Character of the Site

- 3.3.1 The body of evidence indicates extended periods of alluviation and inundation at the site, probably from the Devensian period onwards. There is no recorded evidence to suggest sustained human activity before the post-medieval period, although the origins of Stone Street as a Roman road would suggest at least transient Romano-British activity in the area.
- 3.3.2 The post-medieval remains are almost certainly field boundaries and/ or drainage features, with some associated small-scale borrow pits exploiting the alluvial clay subsoil.

3.4 Site Chronology

Introduction

3.4.1 Although dating evidence was not recovered during this investigation, it is possible to correlate some of the alluvial/ fluvial deposits identified with broad chronozones.

Devensian/Post-Devensian (c. 110000 – 9000 BP)

3.4.2 Gravel and sand, as represented by basal layer 361707; trench 3617TT (URS 1998a), indicative of high-energy water action, may correlate either with seasonal discharge during the Devensian glaciation, or be associated with glacial retreat immediately following this

glaciation. However, the following Late Boreal/ Early Atlantic period (i.e. c. 11000 - 9000 BP) is also associated with a series of high-energy 'cut and fill' phases within alluvial zones, possibly as a result of increased sea-level at this time (Brown 1997, 210).

Early Holocene (c. 10000 – 1100 BC)

3.4.3 The presence of waterlogged plant macrofossils within gravel 358106 probably precludes the possibility that this deposit is pre-Holocene in date, and is more likely to be Neolithic or Bronze Age.

Mid Holocene (c. 1100 BC – AD 410)

3.4.4 Parallels with similar sequences recorded elsewhere in Kent suggest the distinct markerevent 358104 may either be Late Bronze Age or Romano-British in date.

Post-medieval (AD 1800 onwards)

3.4.5 All features recorded during the preceding evaluation (URS 1998a) that produced dating evidence were post-medieval or later.

4 IMPORTANCE OF REMAINS

4.1 Scheduled Monument Criteria

4.1.1 The results from Stone Street have been assessed against the Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling monuments (Period, Rarity, Documentation, Group Value, Survival, Fragility and Diversity). In the absence of secure dating evidence, significant archaeological remains and/or deposits and sufficient detailed background knowledge of the general area, the results as presented do not satisfy the criteria as defined.

4.2 Potential

Structural

4.2.1 The results from Stone Street offer no potential to contribute to the CTRL research objectives from a structural point of view.

Artefactual

4.2.2 The results from Stone Street offer no potential to contribute to the CTRL research objectives from an artefactual point of view.

Environmental

4.2.3 Although undated, the fieldwork has identified a depositional sequence that may include a distinct marker event that can be correlated with similar discoveries elsewhere on the North Kent coast. As such, the Stone Street archive may potentially contribute to future research into this area, when dating evidence for the sequence is available. In the absence of such dating evidence, however, the environmental potential is minimal.

4.3 Discussion

- 4.3.1 As noted above, the alluvial sequence above the basal gravel provides a typical Holocene alluvial sequence, the majority of the sediments probably representing floodplain or saltmarsh along the East Stour River. Occupation and activity may have occurred seasonally throughout the alluviation as seen elsewhere (e.g. Avon Levels, North Kent coastal plain), but the stasis horizon provides a greater potential for occupation (temporary, seasonal or semi-permanent) than the rest of the Holocene alluvial sequence.
- 4.3.2 The sequences now recorded at Stone Street West (trench 3617TT and 3581TT) now allow us to outline the sedimentary history of the East Stour floodplain in that area and evaluate its significance and potential for human activity.
- 4.3.3 The basal gravel is probably associated with cold Devensian climates and high-energy rivers, when sea levels were considerably lower than the present day. Large discharge would have been seasonal and in general created environments inhospitable for human activity. The deposits themselves contain relatively low palaeo-environmental potential, and there are no records of worked flint or other artefacts from these or other gravel local to the site.
- 4.3.4 The fine-grained alluvium over the gravel is typical of floodplain alluvium, representing overbank floodplain alluvium rather than channel fill. The rare palaeo-laminations (context 358103) may indicate near-source deposition in a local mudflat, rather than vegetated environment.
- 4.3.5 Through comparison with alluvial sequences on the North Kent coast (Scaife for Wessex Archaeology unpubl.) and recent studies in the Avon Levels (Allen and Scaife unpubl.;

Gardiner *et al.* in press; Locock 2000) and the Solent (Allen and Gardiner 2000), it is possible to demonstrate that alluviated landscape in southern England, although 'marginal' in terms of permanent settlement, may not be marginal in terms of the resource base and life-style of communities who inhabit the region (cf Louwe Kooijmans 1993). Such areas are likely to represent habitats grading from mudflat, through saltmarsh, and watermeadow, to damp grassland.

- 4.3.6 Such environments provide important resources (clay, flint, salt) and the habitats provide opportunities for fishing and fowling, and the collection of important commodities such as reeds and rushes for thatching, weaving and basket making. The floodplains may provide rich soils, but importantly provide summer grazing (esp. cattle). Winter floodwaters retain soil warmth facilitating early rapid grass growth providing a lush sward for late spring and summer grazing. In the Avon Levels, for instance, local fluctuations in relative sea level provided short epochs when established seasonal settlement occurred in the later Iron Age (e.g. Hallen Marsh), and this may be replicated elsewhere in southern England.
- 4.3.7 There are, however, no previously identified stasis or soil horizons in the East Stour valley, and thus we cannot provide any indication of the date of the stasis recorded at Stone Street West. The nature of the material does not allow us to consider radiocarbon determinations. Nevertheless, the discovery, and identification of this soil is a useful contribution to the growing knowledge of the development and use of the North Kent landscape. Furthermore, it provides an important addition to that knowledge which can be exploited at a later date when a framework of other sedimentary sequences and dates may have been established.

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6 **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)
Trench records	4	-	P, I
Envi. Sample Sheets	4	-	P, I
A4 Drawings	3	-	P, I
Films (monochrome) S=slide; PR=print	2 PR	-	P, I
Films (colour) S=slide; PR=print	2 S	-	P, I
Soil Samples	9	1 x 10 litre tub 8 x 1 litre spot samples	9 UP
Soil Samples (Monolith/kubiena tin)	2	-	2 UP

Incorporates the archive for ARC SST98 held by Wessex Archaeology

7 SUMMARY REPORT

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to investigate alluvial deposits at Fairmead Farm, Westenhanger (centred on URL grid point 92750 17350; NGR grid point TR 12747 37351). The site is known as Stone Street West (under the URS site code ARC SST99) and within Contract Area 440. The excavation formed part of a programme of archaeological investigation along the proposed route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL), and has been preceded by an environmental assessment and evaluation (ARC SST98).

The investigation revealed a 1.3m thick sequence of deposits that have been provisionally identified in terms of formation process and therefore potential chronological sequence, although no archaeological features or artefacts were recorded during the excavation.

Gravel and sand, identified at the base of the sequence, may be indicative of high-energy water action, and therefore possibly correlate either with seasonal discharge during the Devensian glaciation, or be associated with glacial retreat immediately following this glaciation (c. 11000 – 11000 BP). However, the following Late Boreal/ Early Atlantic period (c. 11000 – 9000 BP) is also associated with a series of high-energy 'cut and fill' phases within alluvial zones. The presence of waterlogged plant macrofossils within later fluvial gravel probably precludes the possibility that this deposit is pre-Holocene, and is more likely to be Neolithic or Bronze Age in date (c. 4000 – 700 BC). Parallels with similar sequences recorded elsewhere in Kent suggest the distinct marker-event, probably indicative of a statis/ stabilisation horizon, may either be Late Bronze Age (c. 1100 – 700 BC) or Romano-British (AD 43 – 410) in date.

8 KENT SMR RECORD SHEET

Kent SMR Record Sheet

Stone Street W	/est (ARC SST9	9)		
CTRL excava Westenhanger and February	tion carried out , near Stone Stre 7 th 20012, SMR f	by We et, field form cor	ssex Archaeology work carried out b npiled 5 th July 200	at Fairmead Farm, between February 5 th 2.
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Summary of Fieldwork Results:

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to investigate alluvial deposits at Fairmead Farm, Westenhanger (centred on URL grid point 92750 17350; NGR grid point TR 12747 37351). The site is known as Stone Street West (under the URS site code ARC SST99) and within Contract Area 440. The excavation formed part of a programme of archaeological investigation along the proposed route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL), and has been preceded by an environmental assessment (URL 1994) and evaluation (URS 1999).

The investigation revealed a complex sequence of deposits that have been provisionally identified in terms of formation process and therefore potential chronological sequence, although no archaeological features or artefacts were recorded during the excavation.

(Summary of Fieldwork Results Cont.)

Gravel and sand, identified at the base of the sequence, may be indicative of high-energy water action, and therefore possibly correlate either with seasonal discharge during the Devensian glaciation, or be associated with glacial retreat immediately following this glaciation (c. 11000 – 11000 BP). However, the following Late Boreal/ Early Atlantic period (c. 11000 – 9000 BP) is also associated with a series of high-energy 'cut and fill' phases within alluvial zones. The presence of waterlogged plant macrofossils within later fluvial gravel probably precludes the possibility that this deposit is pre-Holocene, and is more likely to be Neolithic or Bronze Age in date (c. 4000 – 700 BC). Parallels with similar sequences recorded elsewhere in Kent suggest the distinct marker-event, probably indicative of a statis/ stabilisation horizon, may either be Late Bronze Age (c. 1100 – 700 BC) or Romano-British (AD 43 – 410) in date.

Location of Archive:	Currently at Wessex A	Archaeology,	Portway Ho	ouse, Old	
	Sarum Park, Salisbury, V	Wiltshire, SP4	6EB (01722	2 326867)	
	under site code ARC SS	T99. Final ven	ue for depos	ition to be	
	arranged by URL.		1		
Bibliography: 1. Unio	n Railways Limited [URL],	1994, Chani	nel Tunnel I	Rail Link:	
	Assessment of Historic and volumes)	Cultural Effe	ects - Final	Report (4	
2. Union Railways (South) Limited [URS], 1999, East and West of Stone Street, Westenhanger, unpublished archaeological evaluation					
3.	report no. 004-EZR-SCATL	-00002-AA			
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	Andrew Contatt				
	Andrew Crockett Project Manager				