

**CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK  
UNION RAILWAYS (SOUTH) LIMITED**

**Archaeological Evaluation at  
West of Stone Street (ARC SST98)**

**Environmental Statement Route Window 36**

**FINAL SUMMARY REPORT**

**Contract no. URS/400/ARC/0001  
WA Report no. 45994d**

**Wessex Archaeology**

**3<sup>rd</sup> January 2001**

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<b>Prepared by:</b>  <b>Date:</b>	
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**3<sup>rd</sup> January 2001**

## West of Stone Street

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited to investigate alluvial deposits encountered during evaluation work conducted by Canterbury Archaeological Trust at Fairmead Farm, Westenhanger (centred on TR 12750 37350). The site is known as West of Stone Street (site code ARC SST98). The evaluation was carried out on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1999.

The general sequence of alluvium sealing a fluvial gravel was a typical unremarkable sequence of fine-grained alluvial deposits representing channel fill and/or overbank floodplain alluvium, with mottling and oxidation becoming more redolent towards the surface deposits where a fluctuating water table occurs. A dark grey possibly humic layer evident in all trenches is of note, and coupled with its well-defined upper and lower horizons it may be suggested that this represents a stabilisation horizon, perhaps indicating a more rapidly buried, rather than gradually inundated, surface.

The morphology and coarse matrix of the basal mixed fluvial gravel and sand may be considered indicative of high energy water action, scouring and mixing deposits from various parent materials prior to deposition (i.e. stream bed deposits). Higher energy levels are generally associated with glacial retreat and lowered sea levels, and as such it is possible that this deposit either originates following the Devensian glaciation (i.e. *c.* 18,000 BP), when sea levels were *c.* 100-120 m lower than present day (WA 1998c, 4), or a result of seasonal (spring) discharge during the Devensian. However, there is also evidence to suggest that the Late Boreal/Early Atlantic period (i.e. *c.* 11 – 9,000 BP) witnessed a significant rise in watertables, associated with a series of ‘cut and fill’ phases within alluvial zones. It is suggested that this may be due to increased rainfall associated with the sea level rises occurring at this time.

The preservation of waterlogged plant macrofossils within a later fluvial gravel is notable, and presumably represents the organic surface of the river bed with plant growth which was sealed (and possibly truncated) by high energy fluvially rolled flint pebbles and nodules. Although undated, the organic deposit is unlikely to predate the early Holocene period (i.e. Mesolithic), and is perhaps more likely to be relatively recent (i.e. Neolithic/ Bronze Age), representing either a former course for the East Stour River, or a principal tributary feeding in from the north-east.

Similar sequences containing two, three or more distinct anaerobic horizons have been recorded elsewhere in Kent, such as Chatham, the North Kent marshes, Motney Hill and Gravesend. Generally the stabilisation horizons are associated with the Mesolithic, Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age and Roman periods. At Chatham the prehistoric stabilisation horizons have been radiocarbon dated to *c.* 5,000 BC, 2820-2710 BC and 1530-600 BC respectively. Within this context, if the marker event at West of Stone Street is related to the sequences recorded elsewhere in Kent, then it is most likely to represent Late Bronze Age, or perhaps Romano-British horizons.