

HEATH ROAD, LINTON, KENT:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF INTERIM REPORT

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 *The following report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by AOC Archaeology between 28th June and 4th July 2006 at Heath Road, Linton, Kent on behalf of the Linton Park School. The site is located to the north of the village of Linton and is centred on (NGR) TQ 7541 5085 (Figure 1). The watching brief followed on from an archaeological evaluation carried out at the site during January 2006 (AOC Archaeology 2006).*

The watching brief was conducted upon ground reduction works located along the southern perimeter of the site in an area measuring c. 2100 sq. metres. One linear feature of probable prehistoric date thought to be a field boundary, was discovered during the excavations, along with two larger features which were probably remnants of a solution hollow and tree pit respectively. No other features of archaeological significance were discovered.

The evaluation trenches established the presence of three ditches, a pit and a hearth on the site. The pit was dated to the Iron Age but the remaining features were undated. It is thought that the ditches may run across areas of the site that will be affected by the building works.

2 INTRODUCTION

Site Location

- 2.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 7541 5085, and is within land bounded by Heath Road to the north, woodland to the east and south, and residential buildings to the west. The site is roughly rectangular in shape and measures 2.7 hectares (Figure 2).
- 2.2 The prefabricated structures from the sites former use as a training ground for Kent Fire Brigade Training Centre have been demolished. The proposed development consists of a new independent school and gospel hall.

Planning Background

- 2.3 The Local Planning Authority is Kent County Council. Archaeological advice to the council is provided by Adam Single, Archaeological Advisor to the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.4 Planning permission to undertake the development has been granted under the Town & Country Planning Act (1990) (ref no.: ma/05/1792), subject to conditions. the archaeological condition states that:

i “No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or

successors in title, has secured the implementation of archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specific and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and

- ii following on from the evaluation, any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.”*

This condition has been required in accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16) issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990 (DoE, 1990), and was recommended by Kent County Council Archaeology Advisor.

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The British Geological Survey map (BGS Sheet 286) indicates that the site is situated upon Head covering Hythe Beds.
- 3.2 The topography of the site is formed of a gentle north-facing slope at approximately 115mOD, with the natural ground rising towards the southeastern corner.
- 3.3 No geotechnical investigations have been conducted within the proposed development area.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Little in the way of archaeological excavation has occurred in the area. There are a number of entries in the Kent County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for archaeological features or chance finds within 1km of the site.
- 4.2 A Desk Based Assessment has not been prepared for this project. A brief background is outlined below, summarised from the Specification for an archaeological evaluation provided by Kent County Council's archaeology advisor (KCC 2005).

Prehistoric (before c.AD 43)

- 4.3 Boughton Quarry Camp, an Iron Age *oppidum*, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument 700m to the north of the site. Further, as yet undated, earthworks are present 250m to the south of the site. It has been postulated that these earthworks

represent outlying defensive works serving the *oppidum*, with Heath Road itself overlying an Iron Age trackway, just to the north of the site.

Roman (c. AD 43 - 450)

- 4.4 Other than a single Roman pendant found approximately 250m to the south, no finds or features have been recorded in proximity to the investigation area.

Anglo-Saxon (c.451-1065)

- 4.5 No finds or features have been recorded in proximity to the investigation area.

Medieval (c.1066 - 1485)

- 4.6 Other than a single medieval key found approximately 250m to the south, no finds or features have been recorded in proximity to the investigation area.

Post-Medieval (c.1485 – modern)

- 4.7 Linton Park, a significant English Heritage Registered Park, came into existence in the 18th century. The site initially fell outside the defined boundaries of the Park but was subsequently annexed in the late 19th century. Elements of formal walks and central features within mixed woodland are shown from the Second Edition Ordnance Survey maps onwards. The development of the Fire Brigade Training Centre has been observed to have disturbed evidence of this garden and earlier activity at the site.

Summary of AOC Archaeological Evaluation

- 4.8 The evaluation trenches established the presence of three ditches, a pit and a hearth on the site. All except the pit, which is preliminarily dated to the late Iron Age, are undated. The lack of finds or indication of recent activity within their fills, however, suggests the features all date to antiquity and are possibly contemporary. This assumption is further supported by the presence of earthworks to the south of the site and an *oppidum* and trackway to the north.
- 4.9 The size of the largest ditch, measuring over 2.00m across and 1.50m deep, suggests the presence of earthworks of a considerable size. The scarcity of domestic material may suggest a defensive or ceremonial function, as opposed to domestic use of the site. The east-west orientation of a second ditch suggests it may run across the area of the site that will be affected by the construction of the main school building.
- 4.10 No evidence of any Roman features or Roman material was recovered from the site.

5 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

5.1 The aims of the investigation as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2006) were:

- to record archaeological deposits and features exposed during ground works.
- to mitigate by record the impact of development on surviving archaeological deposits.
- to enable the senior archaeologist at surrey county council to make an informed decision on the status of the condition imposed on planning consent.
- to make available to interested parties the results of the investigation in order to inform the mitigation strategy as part of the planning process.
- to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

5.2 The specific objectives of the watching brief were to:

- record the extent of the ditches seen in the evaluation trenches: are they part of a single enclosure or part of a field pattern?
- collect evidence of material culture to determine the date of the archaeological deposits.
- collect evidence for the local environment, should suitable deposits be encountered.

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Prior to commencing the evaluation works on site, a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) was prepared by AOC Archaeology (AOC Archaeology 2006).

5.2 All fieldwork procedure followed AOC Archaeology Group Ltd Fieldwork Sector On-Site Handbook, dated May 2003 (AOC 2003b) and was conducted in accordance with the WSI.

5.3 The excavation and recording conformed to current best archaeological practice and local and national standards and guidelines. (English Heritage 1991, 1992, 1998a, 2002; IFA 1992, 1994, 1997; Museum of London 1994; United Kingdom Institute for Conservation 1983, 1990; Council for British Archaeology 1987).

5.4 Before excavation commenced, a museum acquisition number was obtained from Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery (**MNEMG 2006.04**). This was used as the site code, as it was during the evaluation.

- 6.3 Material was initially excavated to the top of the natural geology under the constant supervision and observation of an experienced archaeologist. This enabled the archaeologists to locate any cut features that might be present. Where no features of archaeological interest were present, excavation was allowed to continue to the required level of 114.25mOD. Where OD was already below this height, ground level was raised accordingly. Monitoring was not required for these works.
- 6.5 The total area excavated covered c. 2100m sq. metres.
- 6.6 The excavation area was labelled Trench 21, continuing the numbered sequence from the evaluation works.
- 6.7 On completion of machine excavation, features that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. All investigation was by hand, with cleaning, inspection, and recording both in plan and section.
- 6.8 The watching brief was undertaken by Ken Bazley, who was assisted by Les Capon and Chris Clarke. Overall project management was provided by Les Capon for AOC Archaeology. The works were monitored by Adam Single for Kent County Council.

7 RESULTS

- 7.1 The natural geology (21/011) was found at a height of 114.25mOD in the southwest of the excavation area and rose to a height of around 114.70mOD in the southeast corner.
- 7.2 Three features were discernible cut into the natural (Figure 3). The first of these was an ovoid shape [21/002] which extended beyond the southern limit of excavation. It measured 1.08m N-S out from the section and 2.20m E-W. It was 0.58m deep and was filled with soft, light greyish-brown fine clay silt (21/001). No datable evidence was found within the feature, and its irregular sides and base led to interpretation as a natural solution hollow.
- 7.3 Ten metres further east was an irregular S-shaped feature [21/013] which also extended beyond the limit of excavation. It measured 3.05m N-S out from the section and had a maximum width of 1.50m E-W. Filling the feature was firm mid-brown silty clay (21/012) with frequently occurring Kentish ragstone blocks derived from the natural Head geology. Excavation of the feature revealed characteristics normally indicative of a remnant tree pit. No cultural evidence was present.
- 7.4 A linear feature (Figures 3 & 4) was discovered in two locations separated by a 3.5m wide modern truncation, approximately 15m west of the eastern limit of

excavation. It is believed that the two portions were part of the same feature but it was not possible to prove, so accordingly, they were assigned separate context numbers [21/004] and [21/008]. The northern section [21/004] measured 2.5m in length N-S before the truncation at its southern end. The southern section [21/008] measured c. 6m in length N-S, with a 2m long spur near to the southern end. As a whole, including the truncation, the feature measured c. 13m long N-S and was no wider than 0.85m at any point. The fill could uniformly be described as soft, light yellowish-brown silty clay, with little or few natural coarse inclusions. It is probable that this material derives from natural deposits and subsoil being washed into the feature. The linear nature of the cut with its regular sides and base are indicative of human activity, particularly alluding to the probability of it being a field boundary. No datable evidence was found, however, although a flint waste flake from a stratigraphically related higher context (21/005) would suggest a prehistoric date.

- 7.5 A pit [21/006] cut ditch [21/008] (see Plate 1) 1.5m from its northern truncation but was initially thought to be part of the ditch. It measured 0.95m long, 0.95m wide and 0.60m deep and was filled with frequently occurring Kentish ragstone blocks surrounded by loose fine grey silt (21/005). A slot excavated through the fill yielded the aforementioned flint waste flake.



Plate 1: Pit [21/006] on the left, cutting ditch [21/008]. 2m scale.

- 7.6 Sealing the natural geology and the archaeological features was a subsoil (21/010) which became shallower towards the east as a result of horizontal truncation. At its thickest (21/010) was 0.48m thick. A single piece of flint waste flake was retrieved from this deposit.
- 7.7 The subsoil was overlain by a mixture of imported topsoil and made ground (21/009) which was up to 0.20m thick.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The watching brief established the presence of a truncated linear ditch, a pit and two natural features on the site. All except the pit [21/006], which is preliminarily dated to the late prehistoric, are undated. Lack of finds or indication of recent activity within their fills suggests that the features all date to prehistory and are probably contemporary with each other. This pattern is consistent with the results of the archaeological evaluation, which also yielded few finds.
- 8.2 All the features excavated during the watching brief were located along the southern edge of site in the same area as evaluation trenches Tr17, Tr18 and Tr19. It was initially thought that linear ditch [21/004] / [21/008] may be part of a similar linear [19/003] recorded during the evaluation, but the collated survey plans of both phases shows this not to be the case (Figure 3).
- 8.4 The collated survey plans also show that context [21/004], recorded as a solution hollow, does not correlate with any feature found during the evaluation, but that an irregular feature [21/013] ten metres to the east appears to match up with one of the features [18/003] found in Tr18. The latter two were recorded as being a result of natural phenomena but it is unclear whether they are definitely part of the same feature. Barring [18/003], none of the features seen in evaluation trenches Tr17, Tr18, and Tr19 were observed during the watching brief.
- 8.5 The N-S orientated ditches [5/004] and [19/003] recorded in the evaluation trenches were not seen during the watching brief and neither was the E-W orientated ditch [6/004]. It would seem more likely, however, that the latter ditch will be present in the next watching brief phase in the western part of the site.
- 8.6 The size of the linear ditch [21/004] / [21/008], measuring only 0.85m across and 0.88m deep, suggests the likelihood of it being a field boundary. Straight sides and base dispel any notion of natural formation. Although the ditch does not tie in with features from the evaluation, it runs roughly parallel with [5/004] and [19/003], possibly alluding to it being of the same phase of land use.
- 8.7 Cutting the ditch [21/008] was a pit [21/006] containing a flint waste flake. The pit contained frequent large fragments of Kentish ragstone but there was no

- obvious functionality. The piece of struck flint was found well down inside the fill so cannot be considered intrusive.
- 8.8 A further flint waste flake was found during machining of the subsoil (21/010). That struck flint has been found on the site at all is significant as examination of the natural drift geology on the site shows that flint is not present in the material, meaning that the nearest source for flint is several kilometres away on the North Downs. This implicates man as the agent of transport and accordingly, confirms that the site was subject to human interaction during an as yet undefined period of prehistory.
- 8.9 As with the evaluation, there was no evidence of Roman activity present on the site, nor was there any evidence of paths or monumental features associated with the 18th century ornamental gardens.
- 8.10 The Watching Brief will resume during excavations for the school due to be constructed to the west of the site.

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Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 4

APPENDIX A - MNEMG 2006.4 Watching Brief Context Register

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth	Image No.	Plan No.	Section No.
(17/001)	Loosely compacted dark brown sandy clayey silt. Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.20m	-	-	-
(17/002)	Mid to firm mid brown clayey loam. Subsoil	Trench	Trench	0.30m	-	-	-
(17/003)	Slightly reddish brown sandy clay. Natural head drift geology	Trench	Trench	NFE	-	17	-
(18/001)	Loosely compacted dark brown sandy clayey silt. Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.15m	-	-	18
(18/002)	Loose light brownish grey clayey silt fill of [18/003]	4.10m	1.10m	0.70m	-	18	18
[18/003]	Irregular cut	4.10m	1.10m	0.70m	-	18	18
(18/004)	fill of [18/005] or disturbed natural.	2.00m	2.00m	0.60m	-	18	-
[18/005]	Tree bole?	2.00m	2.00m	0.60m	-	18	-
(18/006)	Mid to firm mid brown clayey loam. Subsoil	Trench	Trench	0.20m	-	-	18
(18/007)	Slightly reddish brown sandy clay. Natural head drift geology	Trench	Trench	NFE	20	18	18
(19/001)	Loosely compacted dark brown sandy clayey silt. Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.15m	-	-	19
(19/002)	Loose light brownish grey clayey silt fill of [19/003]	1.00m	0.70m	0.65m	17-19	-	19
[19/003]	Tree bole?	1.00m	0.70m	0.65m	17-19	19	19
(19/004)	Mid to firm mid brown clayey loam. Subsoil	Trench	Trench	0.20m	-	-	19
(19/005)	Slightly reddish brown sandy clay. Natural head drift geology	Trench	Trench	NFE	17-19	19	19
(21/001)	Soft light greyish brown clay silt. Fill of solution hollow [21/002]	2.20m	1.08m	0.57m	46, 47	21	21/002
[21/002]	Irregular cut - solution hollow?	2.20m	1.08m	0.57m	46, 47	21	21/002

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth	Image No.	Plan No.	Section No.
(21/003)	Soft light yellowish brown silty clay. Fill of ditch [21/004]	2.50m	0.84m	0.88m	48, 49	21	21/004
[21/004]	Cut of ditch. Possible field boundary. Equivalent to [21/008]	2.50m	0.84m	0.88m	48, 49	21	21/004
(21/005)	Soft slighty brownish grey clayey sand. Fill of pit [21/006]	0.95m	0.95m	0.60m	40-45, 50-55	21	21/006
[21/006]	Cut of pit.	0.95m	0.95m	0.60m	40-45, 50-55	21	21/006
(21/007)	Soft light yellowish brown silty clay. Fill of ditch [21/008]	c.6.00m	0.85m	0.33m	40-45, 50-55	21	21/006
[21/008]	Cut of ditch. Possible field boundary. Equivalent to [21/004]	c.6.00m	0.85m	0.33m	40-45, 50-55	21	21/006
(21/009)	Soft dark grey clayey silt. Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.20m	-	-	-
(21/010)	Soft light greyish brown clay silt. Subsoil	Trench	Trench	0.48m	-	-	-
(21/011)	Compact dark orange brown sandy clay. Natural head drift geology	Trench	Trench	NFE	All	21	21/006
(21/012)	Firm to compact mid brown silty clay. Fill of [21/013]	3.21m	1.80m	0.27m	-	21	-
[21/013]	Likely tree pit	3.21m	1.80m	0.27m	-	21	-