

Land Adjacent to 253 Watling Street, Dartford, Kent An Archaeological Evaluation Report

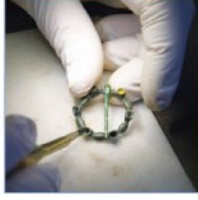
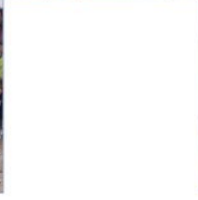
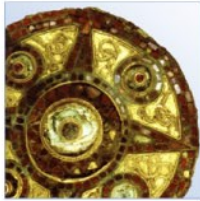
Planning Application Number: DA/07/00927/FUL

National Grid Reference Number: TQ 5633 7352

AOC Project no: 30097

Site Code: WAD 08

Date: 2008



ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

Land Adjacent to 253 Watling Street, Dartford, Kent

An Archaeological Evaluation Report

On Behalf of: Manor Development Solutions
Chequers Hill
Bough Beech,
Edenbridge,
TN8 7PD

National Grid Reference (NGR): TQ 5633 7352

AOC Project No: 30097

Prepared by: Paul Harris

Illustration by: Jonathon Moller

Date of Excavation: 2nd April 2008

Date of Report: April 2008

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Date: April 2008

Approved by:

Date:

Draft/Final Report Stage:

Date:

Contents

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List of illustrations.....		iii
Non-Technical Summary.....		iv
1. Introduction.....		1
1.1 Site Location		1
1.2 Geology and Topogr		1
1.3 Planning Background		1
1.4 Aims and Objectives		1
1.5 Methodology		2
2. Archaeological and Historical Background.....		3
2.1 Background		3
2.2 Prehistoric (before AD 43)		3
2.3 Roman (c. AD43-450)		3
2.4 Anglo-Saxon (c. AD 451-1065)		4
2.5 Medieval (c. AD 1066-1485)		4
2.6 Post-Medieval (c. AD 1486-modern)		5
3 Results		6



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3.1	Trench 1	6
3.2	Trench 2	6
2.3	Finds	7
4	Conclusions and Recommendations	7
4.1	Conclusions	7
4.2	Recommendations	7
5	Bibliography	8
Appendix A – Context Register		12
Appendix B – Oasis Summary Form		13

List of illustrations

Figure 1. Site Location	9
Figure 2. Detailed Site and Trench Layout	10
Figure 3. Trench plans and sections	11

Non-Technical Summary

An Archaeological evaluation was undertaken ON 2nd April 2008 at Land Adjacent to 253 Watling Street, Dartford, Kent. The work was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group on behalf of Manor Development Ltd. The aims of the evaluation were to assess the impact of development on any surviving archaeological remains within the site and to specifically establish the presence any Roman remains related to the adjacent Roman road of Watling Street.

The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of two trenches measuring 10m x 2m at base. The trenches were positioned to the east of a series of demolished garages, as agreed with Kent County Council. Natural chalky clay deposits were identified at between 45.38mOD and 45.76mOD. Sealing the clay were late Post medieval and modern deposits of made ground, in places below layers of disturbed topsoil and hardcore levelling.

Within the northern end of Trench 2 a modern concrete and iron culvert was located. No archaeological remains were identified and no artefacts recovered from the site.

1. Introduction

1.1 Site Location

- 1.1.1 The site was located in the modern day settlement of Dartford, Kent (figure 1). The proposed development area was situated on land adjacent to number 253 Watling Street, bounded to the north by Watling Street, to the east by 253 Watling Street and to the south and west by industrial works and depot units (NGR TQ 5633 7352) (figure 2).
- 1.2.2 The site, accessed from Watling Street, was previously occupied by a number of garages, which were demolished prior to the field evaluation.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The site was situated at approximately 46mOD and is shown on the mapping of the British Geological Survey as lying on Upper Chalk. The natural geology encountered on the site comprised a mixture of chalk and clays.
- 1.2.2 The site was located within an area of naturally sloping topography, which dipped to the north, although dumping layers were previously deposited within the site to create a level plateau for a set of garages.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 The proposed development site has been granted planning permission for the demolition of existing garages and erection of a detached 3 storey building with associated car parking and landscaping. The local planning authority placed the following condition on the planning consent (DA/07/00927/FUL):

No development shall take place until the applicant(s), or their agents or successors in title, has or have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with policy B12 of the Adopted Dartford Local Plan.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The aims of the Evaluation were defined as being:
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
 - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
 - To determine the extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
 - To enable the County Archaeologist to make an informed decision on the status of the archaeology condition and any requirement for further mitigation work.
 - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation in order to inform the mitigation strategy as part of the planning process.

1.4.2 The specific aims of the investigation were:

- To determine the presence of any remains of Roman date on the site. Particularly, are there any remains of Watling Street?
- To determine the presence of any remains of medieval Dartford on the site.

1.4.3 The final aim was to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 A site code **WAD08** was assigned by AOC Archaeology and the Dartford Museum informed of this unique site identity.

1.5.2 The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of 2 trenches, measuring 10m x 2m at base (Trench 1 and 2), orientated north – south, aligned perpendicular to Watling Street. Trench 1 was located 9 metres to the south of Watling Street and 1.10m to the west of number 253 Watling Street 9 (figure 2). Trench 2 was located 2.4 metres to the south of Trench 1, projecting the same orientation (figure 2).

1.5.3 Before excavation the entire site was visually inspected and all trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) to check for live services.

1.5.4 All overburden was removed down to the top of the first recognizable archaeological horizon or the uppermost natural deposit in the event that no archaeological horizons were present; using an EX60 6 tonne 360° excavator with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. All machining was carried out under direct control of an experienced archaeologist.

1.5.5 On completion of machine excavation, all faces of trenches that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools and the full stratigraphic sequence was recorded. Any archaeological remains revealed were excavated by hand with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features or deposits which appeared to be demonstrably worthy of preservation *in situ*.

1.5.6 All recording was undertaken in accordance with the standards and requirements of the Archaeological Field Manual (Museum of London Archaeology Service 3rd edition 1994). Written descriptions, comprising both factual data and interpretative elements was recorded on standardized pro – forma recording sheets. Plans were drawn of each trench at a scale of 1:20. Short representative sample sections of trenches were drawn at 1:10. A digital photographic record was created, illustrating the excavated trenches and sample sections recorded.

1.5.7 Excavated material was examined in order to retrieve artefacts to assist in the analysis of spatial distribution.

1.5.8 A Temporary Bench Mark was set up on the site, transferred from a previously surveyed point on the Dartford Fire Station to the west of the site and levels were recorded for each deposit.

1.5.9 The evaluation work was undertaken in a single day by Paul Harris, Project Supervisor, under the overall project management of Andy Leonard, Project Manager.

2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1 Background

2.1.1 No previous archaeological investigations have occurred on the site and little in the way of archaeological excavation has occurred within the area. The SMR has produced a number of finds found within a 1km radius of the site.

2.2 Prehistoric (before AD 43)

2.2.1 The human history of the Dartford area spans more than 400,000 years. During this time there were extreme climatic changes varying from full Ice Age conditions to warm, inter-glacial phases producing a rich diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna. At various times animal species as diverse as cave lion, monkey, rhino, straight-tusked elephant, bear, mammoth, deer, elk, lemming and bison frequented the Dartford area.

2.2.2 Three matching pieces of a 300,000 year old human skull, recovered at Barnfield Pit, Craylands Lane, and Swanscombe near Dartford in the 1930s and 1950s, are among the oldest human remains ever discovered in Europe. Earlier material than the Swanscombe Skull has also been recovered in the area, in the form of a large number of stone tools of Clactonian type. Animal bones, teeth and fossilised footprints, as well as snail shells and microscopic pollen grains have also been retrieved from Dartford's important prehistoric sites, providing a picture of the flora, fauna, landscape and environmental conditions existing at particular points in time.

2.2.3 Small groups of humans who frequented the Dartford area during these early prehistoric periods generally lived a nomadic lifestyle close to the banks of what would eventually become the River Thames. These people were hunter-gatherers who followed herds of wild animals from place to place, trapping them at their watering holes.

2.2.4 Approximately 5,500 years ago the first farming communities were established in the Dartford area. Forests and woods were cleared to create small fields. Crops were cultivated, and domesticated animals reared. Axes, hoes and rakes were made using flint, wood, leather and animal bone. The hunting of animals continued alongside farming activities. A number of finely worked Neolithic arrowheads have been found close to the centre of modern-day Dartford. There are indicators that a Neolithic settlement existed in the valley of the Ebbsfleet, a stream which flows into the River Thames at Northfleet east of Dartford. Pieces of pottery retrieved from this site appear to be related to the Peterborough phase of this period.

2.2.5 Dartford Heath was an important centre of activity during the Bronze Age. Hoards of gold brooches and bronze axes have been found in this part of Dartford.

2.2.6 Settlement in the Dartford area from the seventh to the first centuries B.C. is evidenced by pottery, agricultural implements and brooches. There was a significant Iron Age village site at Farningham just along the Darent Valley from Dartford, and another settlement consisting of two hut circles at Stone to the east of Dartford. Deposits of Iron Age pottery have been found at West Hill, Dartford.

2.3 Roman (c. AD43-450)

2.3.1 The first major settlement at Dartford came in the Roman period with the building of a military road (later known as Watling Street) from London to the Kent coast across the River Darent by means of a ford. The site borders the modern day line of Watling Street which is thought to follow its Roman counterpart between Canterbury and Rochester. Roadside settlements and cemeteries have been found along the course of Watling Street.

- 2.3.2 The rich soils of the Darenth Valley also attracted the Romans and their villa estates, which produced corn to feed the inhabitants of London. Some of these estates are well known i.e. Darenth, Lullingstone and Farningham. Important Roman settlements existed between Crayford and Welling (*Noviomagus*) and at Springhead (*Vagniacae*) on the borders of modern-day Dartford and Gravesend. Dartford itself was the site of a large and important Roman cemetery (East Hill) and had its own modest Roman villa with another villa sited at nearby Wilmington.
- 2.3.3 Dartford was in the front line of the Roman conquest of Britain, and for four hundred years almost every aspect of local life was influenced by the thinking and lifestyle of an alien power with its own religions, culture and language. Dartford declined in importance after AD 410, the main Roman roads fell into disuse and disrepair, and the general standard of living was greatly reduced.
- 2.3.4 A second century Roman coin has been found 15m to the north of the site (HER reference No TQ 57 SE 28). A fourth century coin was also found about 350m west of the site (TQ 57 SE45).

2.4 Anglo-Saxon (c. AD 451-1065)

- 2.4.1 The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Kent began during the first half of the fifth century A.D. Little is known about the location, size and nature of Saxon settlements in and around the Dartford area (AOC 2006). A few occupation sites have been identified in the local area; some of these were sited close to former Roman villa sites. Some of the largest or most interesting Saxon cemeteries in Kent have been found in and around Dartford - at Dartford, Riseley (Horton Kirby), Horton Kirby, Darenth, Farningham and Polhill.
- 2.4.2 Most of the archaeological evidence from local sites suggests that there was a significant influx of Saxon settlers into the Dartford area between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D.
- 2.4.2 An Anglo-Saxon brooch was found approximately 715m to the south-west of the site (TQ 57 SE153).

2.5 Medieval (c. AD 1066-1485)

- 2.5.1 Dartford grew rapidly after the Norman Conquest, due in the most part to being off the main road between London and Canterbury. This led to much of its income stemming from trade and commerce. The medieval town was centred on Watling Street, in the area to the west of the site. Surrounding the town was a flourishing area of agriculture.
- 2.5.2 In 1086 the royal manor of *Tarentfort* (Dartford) comprised a mixture of arable land, meadow, pasture and woodland. Other features of note were the parish church, Holy Trinity, three smaller chapels, a mill, and two wharves on the River Darenth. Teams of oxen were used to plough the land; pigs foraged in the local woods.
- 2.5.3 The years 1000-1500 saw a remarkable transformation in the size and importance of this former royal manor. Dartford evolved into a thriving and successful medieval market town supporting a population of approximately 1,000 people. The town's new status arose from its position on the main road from London to Canterbury and the Kent coast, and its close involvement with trade and commerce. Dartford became an important market town at the centre of a network of smaller agricultural communities scattered along the fertile Darenth Valley and along the south bank of the River Thames.
- 2.5.4 Dartford's status was further enhanced by its role in the religious life and administration of Kent. The town became a deanery of the diocese of Rochester, provided one of the venues for the bishop of Rochester's consistory court and housed England's only community of Dominican nuns at Dartford

Priory. The expansion and increasing economic prosperity of Dartford during the medieval period was also helped by the large numbers of pilgrims who passed through the town *en route* to the cathedral shrines at Rochester and Canterbury.

- 2.5.5 This period in Dartford's history marks the gradual change from an underdeveloped agricultural market town economy to an economy where trade, commerce and industry became increasingly important.
- 2.5.6 Dartford was one of nearly 700 market towns in England depending on agriculture and trading for their prosperity. Dartford was more fortunate than many other similar towns because it was relatively close to London and was sufficiently far from other Kentish market towns not to have to compete for trade and marketing opportunities.

2.6 Post-Medieval (c. AD 1486-modern)

- 2.6.1 The period 1500-1600 was one of instability and inflation causing poverty and sometimes homelessness for a large number of ordinary labourers and unskilled workers. There were those in and around Dartford who profited from inflation, especially those who owned land and had surplus produce to sell in the market. The wealth of Dartford's gentry and yeoman farmers rose rapidly. They were able to invest in properties, land and luxury goods, which gave them a strong position in community life and community affairs.
- 2.6.3 Dartford had a strong identity as a stopping-place for pilgrims. The dissolution of Dartford Priory also robbed Dartford of an important source of status and prestige. Fortunately, the decision by Henry VIII to build one of his royal manor houses at Dartford brought the town once again under the spotlight.
- 2.6.4 The region's geographical position and natural resources attracted a number of leading entrepreneur industrialists to establish pioneering new industries in the Dartford area. Sir Martin Frobisher's smelting works, Sir John Spilman's paper mill, Godfrey Box's iron-slitting mill, and other less prominent manufactories created a mini 'industrial revolution' at a time when many other similar towns were still reliant on an agriculturally based economy.
- 2.6.5 Dartford's economy was consolidated between 1600 and 1800. Transport improvements, including the construction of proper roads and the introduction of stage-coach services, opened up new markets for local traders and merchants, encouraging the development of a network of local and regional trade. The prosperity and confidence of Dartford's gentry, merchants, and middle-classes fuelled changes in both living standards and cultural life.
- 2.6.6 Urbanisation and an increasingly mobile population brought additional problems including a rise in the number of beggars, paupers and criminals. Responsibility for addressing and resolving these entrenched problems fell on the parish vestry and the ratepayers. The construction of a Bridewell (prison) and a workhouse in Dartford showed that the local authorities were prepared to tackle the problems head-on. However, there was still a great deal of dependence on agriculture and the marketing of agricultural produce. These traditional bulwarks of the local economy co-existed alongside the seeds of industrialisation that would transform Dartford's economy in the nineteenth century.
- 2.6.7 The story of Dartford in the twentieth century is the story of the gradual decline of the old community that existed in the town in Victorian times and earlier, and the growth of a new town community. The 1910 Ordnance Survey map is the first to show buildings on the site (Ordnance Survey, 1910). Before this period the site seems to have been in an area of agricultural activity.

3 Results

3.1 Trench 1

Northern End, East facing section (figure 3)

46.27 to 46.09mOD	(1/001). Mid yellow builders sand mixed with mid – light brown silt, containing frequent inclusions of modern building material. Rubble demolition layer.
46.09 to 45.86mOD	(1/002). Dark blackish grey clay, with frequent charcoal and rounded pebble (< 15mm) inclusions. Buried topsoil.
45.86 to 45.66mOD	(1/003). Mid orangey brown clayey silt with occasional angular flint inclusions. Made ground.
45.66 to 45.40mOD	(1/004). Mid brown sandy clay with occasional chalk and rounded pebble (<10mm) inclusions. Made ground.
45.40 to 45.25mOD	(1/005). Mid – light brownish orange clay with moderate gravel (<10mm) and very occasional late post medieval CBM and pottery inclusions. Dumping Layer.
45.25m+OD	(1/006). Mid – light whitish yellow chalky clay with occasional inclusions of large nodular flints (< 200mm). Natural deposit.

3.1.1 Trench 1 (10.00 by 2.00 by 1.02m) was excavated to the south of the site entrance and Watling Street. It was orientated north– south.

3.1.2 Natural deposits were reached at 45.25mOD in the northern end of the trench and 45.38mOD in the southern end of the trench. The deposit consisted of mid – light whitish chalky clay, containing occasional nodular flint inclusions (1/006). In places the deposit contained patches of truncation from the made ground deposit above (1/005).

3.1.3 Overlying the natural chalky clay was mid – light brownish orange dumped deposit (1/005) 0.15m thick, situated below a deposit of mid brown, sandy clay made ground (1/004) that contained occasional chalk and rounded pebble inclusions. This was 0.26m deep. Above this was a 0.20m deep deposit of mid orangey brown clayey silt, containing occasional angular flint inclusions (1/003) This was sealed by another deposit of made ground comprised of dark blackish grey clay with frequent charcoal and pebble inclusions (1/002) 0.23m thick. The surface deposit was a mixture of mid yellow sand and mid – light brown silt, containing frequent inclusions of modern building materials (1/001).

3.1.4 No archaeological features were revealed and no artefacts recovered from the excavation of the Trench.

3.2 Trench 2

Southern End, East facing section (figure 3)

46.60 to 46.34mOD	(2/001). Dark blackish grey clay, with frequent demolition rubble, charcoal and rounded pebble (< 15mm) inclusions. Topsoil.
46.34 to 46.20mOD	(2/002). Light greyish brown clayey silt, with occasional inclusions of modern building materials. Disturbed subsoil.
46.20 to 46.00mOD	(2/003). Mid orangey brown clayey silt with occasional angular flint inclusions. Made ground.
46.00 to 45.90mOD	(2/004). Mid – light brownish orange clay with moderate gravel (<10mm)

	and very occasional late post medieval CBM and pottery inclusions. Dumping Layer.
45.90 to 45.70m+OD	(2/005). Mid – light whitish yellow chalky clay with occasional inclusions of large nodular flints (< 200mm). Natural deposit.

- 3.2.1 Trench 2 (10.00 by 2.00 by 0.90m) was excavated 2.4m to the south of Trench 1, in the southern half of the site, aligned north–south.
- 3.2.2 Natural deposits of London clay were reached at 45.90mOD in the south-eastern end of the trench and 45.33mOD in the northern end of the trench. The deposit consisted of mid – light whitish chalky clay, containing occasional nodular flint inclusions (2/005). In places the deposit contained patches of truncation from the made ground deposit above (2/004).
- 3.2.3 Overlying the natural chalky clay was mid – light brownish orange dumping deposit (2/004) 0.10m deep. This was overlain by a deposit of mid orangey brown clayey silt, containing occasional angular flint inclusions (2/003) 0.20m deep). Subsoil sealing this layer was light greyish brown clayey silt disturbed 0.14m showing evidence of reworking. The uppermost deposit comprised dark greyish brown clayey silt, disturbed topsoil, containing frequent inclusions of modern demolition rubble (2/001).
- 3.2.4 A modern concrete and iron built culvert cover [2/006] was located within the northern end of Trench 2 (1.40 by 1.16m) (figure 3).
- 3.2.5 No archaeological features were revealed and no artefacts recovered from the excavation of the Trench.

3.3 Finds

- 4.4.1 A sherd of brown glazed 18th century pottery and contemporary pieces of CBM were identified within a dumped deposit (2/004) situated above the natural chalky clay in Trench 2. The artefacts were not retained past identification. No other Archaeological artefacts were identified during the Evaluation.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

- 4.1.1 The evaluation revealed a deep stratigraphy of modern and late post medieval deposits of made ground situated above the natural chalky clays, negating the naturally sloping topography of the site to create a man made plateau. No archaeological remains were identified, although a modern concrete and iron culvert cover was found in the north of trench 2.

4.2 Recommendations

- 4.2.1 The evaluation met its primary objective: to establish the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is required to satisfy the archaeological planning condition on this site. However, the final decision regarding any further work will rest with the Kent County Council and its archaeology advisor, Ben Found.
- 4.2.2 Publication of the results will be through the ADS OASIS form (Appendix B).

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Figure 1 – Site Location

Figure 2 – Detailed Site and Trench Layout

Figure 3 – Trench plans and sample sections

Appendices

Appendix A – Context Register

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth
1/001	Mixed yellow sand, mid – light brown silt and modern building materials, Rubble demolition layer.	10.00m	1.80m	0.18m
1/002	Dark blackish grey clay made ground	10.00m	1.80m	0.23m
1/003	Mid orangey brown clay levelling layer	10.00m	1.80m	0.20m
1/004	Mid brown sandy clay made ground	10.00m	1.80m	0.26m
1/005	Mid – light brownish orange clay dumping layer	10.00m	1.80m	0.15m
1/006	Mid – light whitish yellow chalky clay natural	10.00m	1.80m	0.06m+
2/001	Dark greyish brown clayey silt topsoil	10.00m	1.80m	0.26m
2/002	Light greyish brown clayey silt subsoil	10.00m	1.80m	0.14m
2/003	Mid orangey brown silty clay levelling layer	10.00m	1.80m	0.20m
2/004	Mid – light orangey brown silty clay dumping layer	10.00m	1.80m	0.10m
2/005	Mid – light whitish yellow chalky clay natural	10.00m	1.80m	0.05m+
2/006	Iron reinforced concrete culvert cover	1.40m	1.16m	-

Appendix B – Oasis Summary Form

OASIS ID: aocarcha1-40432

Project details

Project name LAND ADJACENT TO 253 WATLING STREET, DARTFORD, KENT

Short description of the project An Archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 2nd April 2008 at Land Adjacent to 253 Watling Street, Dartford, Kent. The work was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group on behalf of Manor Development Ltd. The aims of the evaluation were to assess the impact of development on any surviving archaeological remains and to specifically establish the presence of any Roman remains related to the adjacent Roman road of Watling Street. The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of two trenches positioned to the east of a series of demolished garages. Natural chalky clay deposits were identified at between 45.38mOD and 45.76mOD. Sealing the clay were late Post medieval and modern deposits of made ground, in places below layers of disturbed topsoil and hardcore levelling. A modern concrete and iron culvert was discovered, but no archaeological remains were identified and no artefacts recovered from the site.

Project dates Start: 02-04-2008 End: 02-04-2008

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated WAD 08 - Sitecode
project reference
codes

Any associated DA/07/00927/FUL - Planning Application No.
project reference
codes

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed

Project location

Country England
Site location KENT DARTFORD DARTFORD Land Adjacent to 253 Watling Street, Dartford, Kent
Postcode DA2 6
Study area 101.00 Square metres
Height OD Min: 45.38m Max: 45.76m

Project creators

Name of AOC Archaeology
Organisation

Project brief Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
originator

Project design AOC Archaeology
originator

Project Andy Leonard
director/manager

Project supervisor Paul Harris

Type of Developer
sponsor/funding
body

Name of Manor Development Ltd.
sponsor/funding
body

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Archive Dartford Museum
recipient

Digital available Media 'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper recipient Archive Dartford Museum

Paper available Media 'Context sheet','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Land Adjacent to 253 Watling Street, Dartford, Kent

Author(s)/Editor(s) Harris, P

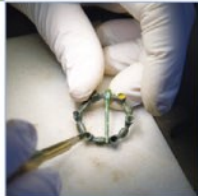
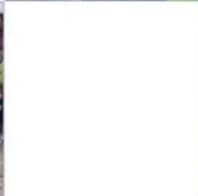
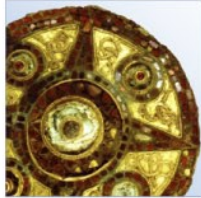
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