



WARRIOR BURIALS FOUND

The excavation of a Late Iron Age and Early Roman site at Brisley Farm, Chilmington Green, Ashford, Kent.

In 1999 Archaeology South East, the commercial contracts division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit, undertook an evaluation over an area c.350m by 250m in extent on a site (now known as "Chartfields") located c.3km to the south of Ashford town centre to be developed for housing by Ward Homes. The location is shown overleaf. Archaeological work on the site has been funded by Ward Homes.

The site is situated on poorly drained Weald Clay soils at 38m OD, (TQ 9920 4020). There are no rivers in the immediate vicinity, though it lies at the watershed between the rivers Medway and Stour. Immediately to the north-west of the site is a significant hill formed from an outlier of Greensand. The land has been ploughed during the last 50 years. The Westhawk Farm early Roman cross-roads settlement site, also with evidence for Late Iron Age activity, lies c.750m to the east of this site.

Four separate excavations (phased with the development programme) have been carried out by Archaeology South East at the site since 1999, of



The late iron age burial chamber.

which the latest (phases 3 and 4), completed on the 15th of February 2002 following eight months of fieldwork covering an area of c.250m by 80m, is the largest so far. The machine stripping revealed a spatially extensive, intensively developed and relatively short-lived Late Iron Age site with evidence for activity continuing into the early Roman period. Initial pottery dating suggests occupation and activity on the site from c.200BC to 100AD with evidence for a possible Bronze Age field system beneath. Fig. 1 shows the

Part of the collection of broken pottery found in the graves.



pre-excavation plan of phases 3 and 4.

Initial results indicate woodland clearance in the Bronze Age followed by a series of separate enclosures of Late Iron Age date, defined by curving ditches and gullies and encompassing a number of possible roundhouse sites. During the 1st century BC and into the 1st century AD the boundaries of some of these 'enclosures' were re-defined, sometimes as many as four times, until the neighbouring enclosure was reached and no further space was available.

Into this Late Iron Age settled and cultivated landscape two high status extended inhumation burials were placed. The first of these warrior-burials was that of a young adult male with head to the south, within a possible 'coffin' and accompanied by a sword, spear, shield, brooch, butt beaker, cup, plate and pig's head. This grave was enclosed by a square ditch and possibly covered by a mound. The second square-ditched burial was also of a young adult male, head to the north, also within a possible 'coffin' and accompanied by a long sword, spear and shield with one butt beaker, (dated 10-30AD). It appears that this second grave, the more monumental of the two, became the focal point for the creation of a rectangular ditched enclosure with an entrance way onto a linear ditched trackway to the south. Large quantities of broken pottery, cremated and unburnt animal bone were deposited in the re-cut south ditches of the two burials and within the ditches that formed the sides to the rectangular enclosure. Other significant deposits of cremated animal bone, some within whole vessels have been

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