PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

EXCAVATIONS AT MOLEHILL ROAD, CHESTFIELD, KENT

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, Unit 54 Brockley Cross Business Centre,
98 Endwell Road, Brockley, London SE4 2PD
Tel: 020 7732 3925 . 020 7639 9091 Fax: 020 7732 7896 e-mail: info@pre-construct.com
Website: www.pre-construct.com

EXCAVATIONS AT MOLEHILL ROAD, CHESTFIELD, KENT

Kevin Wooldridge, Malcolm Lyne and Victoria Ridgeway

SUMMARY

An archaeological excavation was undertaken at Molehill Road, Chestfield, Kent by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, ahead of development of the site for housing. Late Bronze Age activity was indicated by an assemblage of lithic material recovered from later features and a ploughsoil deposit, which covered the site. Postholes and a semi-circular ditch possibly dated from this period. A number of pits were uncovered which contained pottery and kiln furniture indicative of Romano-British pottery manufacture in the vicinity. The pits also contained briquetage derived from the salt industry. Other residual finds recovered from the ploughsoil included a quantity of medieval ceramics, mainly of the Tyler Hill industry, alongside some post-medieval wares, indicating occupation nearby, with exploitation of the area for agricultural purposes.

INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, in advance of development for housing, on land at Molehill Road, Chestfield, Kent (National Grid Reference TR 1400 6570) between the 9 and 14 July 1998 (Fig. 1). A total of 21 trenches was excavated. These identified varying depths of topsoil overlying natural London Clay. In only two Trenches, 2 and 15, were significant archaeological remains revealed. As a result of this initial evaluation it was decided that an archaeological excavation should be undertaken and accordingly the two original trenches were extended; Trench 2 to cover an area of 270m2 and Trench 15, an area of 155m2 (Fig. 1). The excavation of these extended areas was carried out between the 22 July and 7 August 1998.

Geology and Topography

The underlying geology in the vicinity of the site was London Clay, revealed in all 21 evaluation trenches, overlain by topsoil, varying in thickness between 160mm and 440mm and containing finds of mainly medieval and post-medieval date. The London Clay sloped down slightly to the north and west from 15.77m AOD in Trench 8 in the south-east, to a low of 14.42m AOD in Trench 9, approximately 180m to the west. Towards the north-west the surface of this deposit was, in places, sandier and more like brickearth in nature. The modern topography reflected the sloping nature of the underlying deposits, with slightly higher ground to the south and east, sloping down to the north-west to rise again beyond limits of excavation.

Numerous field drains in the vicinity of the site suggest that prior to the establishment of drainage systems the site is likely to have been relatively wet and marshy and this is further suggested by a series of ponds immediately to the north of the development site. Cartographic evidence from the late nineteenth century suggests that such occupation as was present in the vicinity of the site was concentrated beyond the site to the north and west and that at this time the site would have been used for pasture.

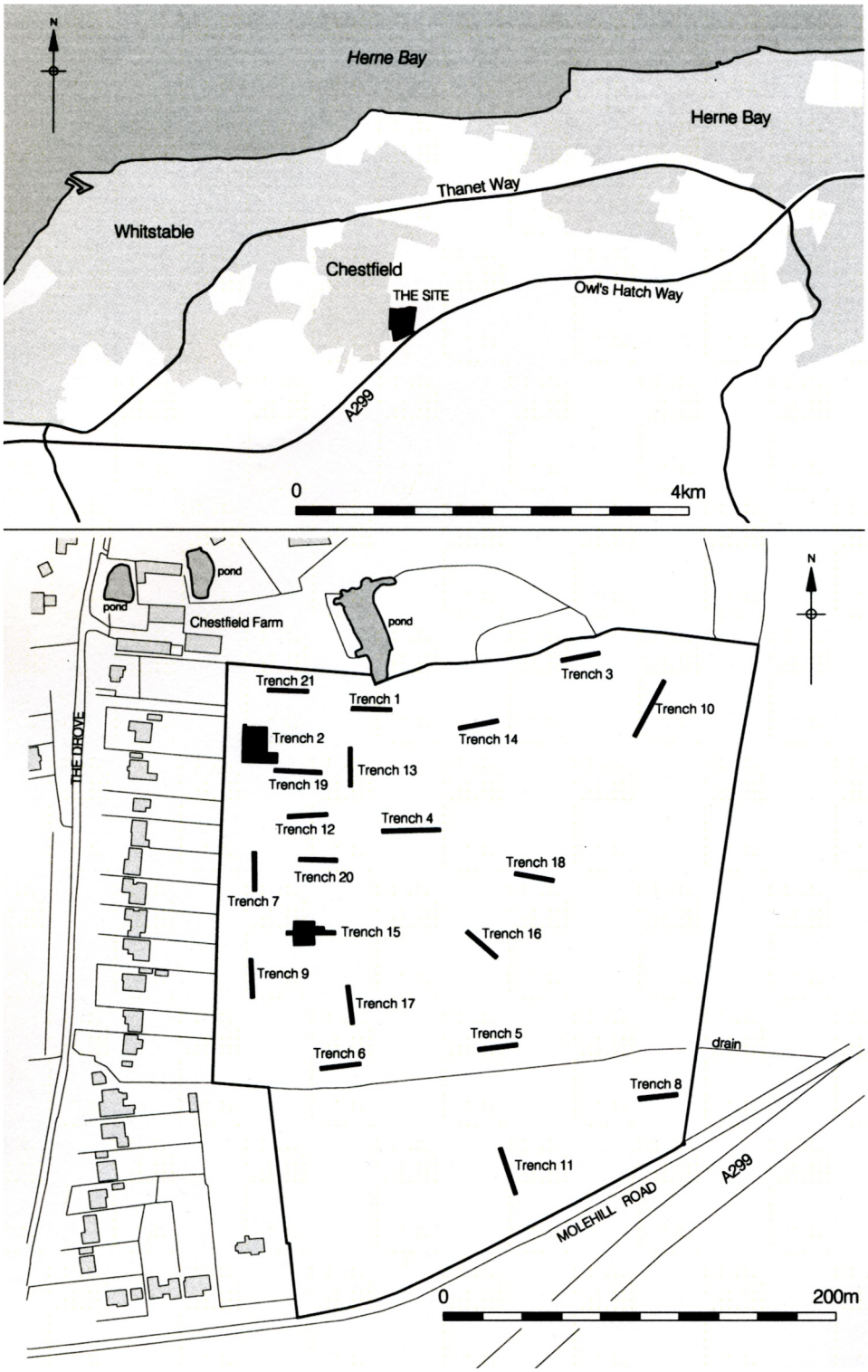

Fig. 1. The site and trench locations

Archaeological Methodology

The evaluation trenches measured between 20m and 30m in length and were all 1.80m wide (Fig. 1). Of these only trenches 1, 2, 3, 15 and 20 produced any evidence for archaeological features, although finds, mainly of medieval and post-medieval date, were recovered from the topsoil in most trenches. On the basis of the results of evaluation Trenches 2 and 15 were extended in size; Trench 2 measuring approximately 20m north-south by 20m east-west and Trench 15 measuring approximately 15m north-south by 10m east-west (Fig. 1).

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

Bronze Age activity

In Trench 20 the careful cleaning of the surface of the London Clay revealed a small round cut [57] backfilled with sandy clay containing a large quantity of burnt flint fragments, possibly representing the packing around a post. The use of burnt flint suggested the posthole was probably prehistoric in origin although unfortunately the feature produced no diagnostic dating evidence. However a small assemblage of residual lithic material recovered from the ploughsoil and later features on the site suggests Bronze Age activity in the vicinity and may reflect the date of this feature. A further posthole [86] and ring ditch excavated in Trench 2 [75] may also have been associated with this phase of activity (Fig. 2).

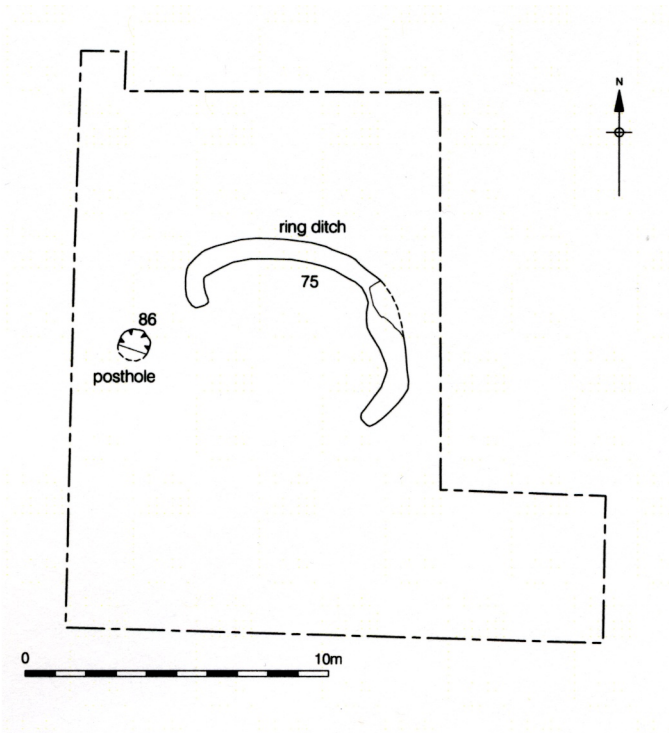

Fig. 2. Late Bronze Age features in Trench 2

Late Iron Age/early Roman activity

In the centre of Trench 2, a large area of dark-stained silty clay proved to be a number of intercutting pits with very similar backfills (Fig. 3). The earliest was an oval-shaped feature [20], the backfill of which was found to contain large amounts of pottery, charcoal, pieces of burnt clay, daub and small fragments of burnt animal bone. The pottery assemblage indicated a late Iron Age/pre Flavian date for the backfilling of the feature. This was cut by pit [71], apparently backfilled soon after AD 50 with a similar charcoal stained silty clay. Pit [71] was in turn cut by a much larger and deeper circular pit [73], the finds assemblage from which suggests backfilling in the mid to late 1st century AD. A further small sub-circular pit [80] in Trench 2 had a primary fill of charcoal-stained silt, burnt bone and burnt flint.

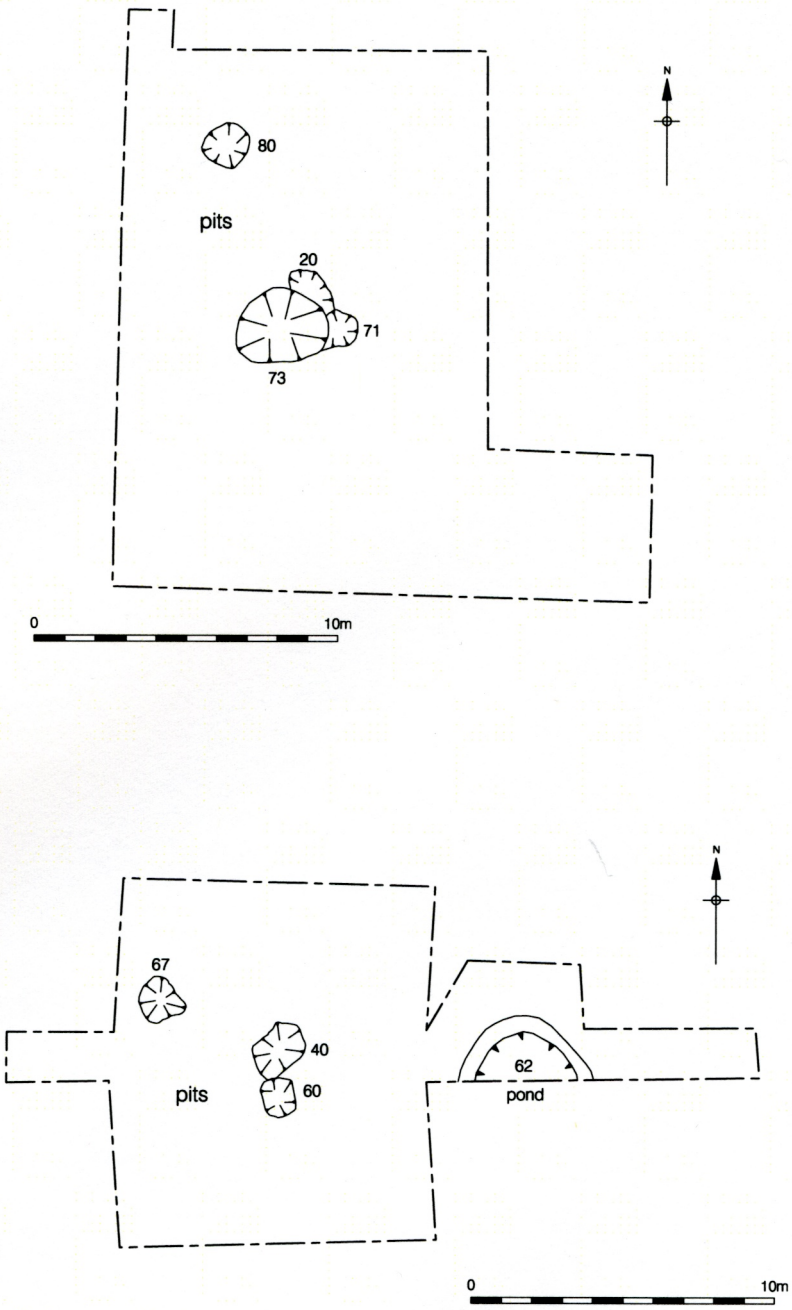

Fig. 3. Late Iron Age/Early Roman features in Trenches 2 and 15

In the centre of Trench 15, two intercutting pits were excavated. The earlier of the two, [40], had a stepped profile and contained a mixed clay silt fill, within which were contained five distinct clusters of pottery fragments. The pottery assemblage recovered from this feature indicated a late 1st century AD date for its backfill. A second pit [60], was dug immediately to the south of this feature, slightly truncating the southern edge of pit [40] (see Fig. 3). Mid to late 1st century AD pottery was recovered from the backfill of this feature suggesting that the two were broadly contemporary.

A third pit [67] was excavated in Trench 15, to the north-west of pit [40]. Its backfill was very similar in nature to the backfills of the other pits and contained broadly contemporary pottery. A large, shallow circular feature [62] was uncovered on the eastern side of Trench 15 and interpreted as the remains of a dewpond. No dating evidence was recovered from the fill of this feature and therefore it is difficult to establish whether or not it was contemporary with the other features in Trench 15.

Medieval and Post-Medieval activity

In Trench 1 a small sub-circular feature was seen to cut the London Clay. The fill was found to contain a few sherds of tile, probably of post-medieval date. It is possible that the feature may represent the location of a fence or boundary post on the northern side of the field, but more probably natural ground disturbance caused by the roots of a small tree or bush. In Trench 3 the base of a small late medieval earthenware jug was recovered from the surface of the exposed London Clay, implying that this may have represented a contemporary ground surface, although no archaeological features were noted in the trench.

DISCUSSION

It may be significant that the trenches that produced archaeological features, and those which provided the bulk of the residual material from the overlying ploughsoil, were concentrated towards the west and north-west of the site, in an area where the underlying natural London Clay was overlain by sandier deposits. The site was low-lying and, as has already been established, likely to be fairly marshy, at least seasonally. However the area to the north-west of the site appears from cartographic evidence to have been utilised historically for occupation (Hawkins 1998) and indeed the focus of modern-day Chestfield is to the north and west of the site, which suggests that the archaeological remains may represent activities on the periphery of settlement in this location.

The Late Bronze Age

A small assemblage of worked flint was recovered from the site from residual contexts and ploughsoil deposits in Trenches 2, 7, 12, 13, 15 and 20. No diagnostic types were recovered, although technological and metrical considerations suggested that the majority of the assemblage shared a similar origin. The raw material used consisted predominantly of brown semi-translucent to opaque flint obtained from alluvially derived gravel pebbles, although some was apparently derived from the parent chalk which outcrops nearby. It was generally in

a good condition and, although recovered from residual contexts, had probably not been subjected to extensive taphonomic displacement. The assemblage consisted of small, broad flakes with unmodified, relatively thick striking platforms, fairly unsystematically reduced using hard hammer percussive technology, with few formally retouched tool types present. This was consistent with the one core recovered which was small with multiple randomly-oriented striking platforms showing no evidence for the creation or maintenance of those platforms. The assemblage generally demonstrated the impoverishment of techniques and tradition commonly found from the Later Neolithic onwards (Edmonds 1995), and was most consistent with later Bronze Age traditions of flint working. Although the flint assemblage was recovered from residual contexts, its presence suggests Bronze Age activity on or near the site.

Previous archaeological work in the general vicinity of Chestfield has recorded evidence of Bronze Age activity, but without locating the focus of a settlement of this date. However, recent excavations some 200m north of the site at Churchwood Drive (Allen 1999) revealed evidence of a possible oval hut with associated hearth, surrounded by an extensive complex of ditches and a large enclosure ditch. Several phases of ditch cutting were apparent and associated artefacts included flint tempered pottery of a type produced from the mid Bronze Age to late Iron Age. The complex of ditches suggested that water-management was of vital importance. It may well be that some of the material from Molehill Road was colluvially derived from further up-slope.

None of the archaeological features excavated could be positively identified as being contemporaneous with the worked flint, although a post-hole [57] excavated in Trench 20 was packed with a quantity of burnt flint, which might suggest a prehistoric origin. The charred remains of emmer and/or spelt wheat, along with charcoal, were recovered from this feature.

An undated, shallow, slightly irregular, horseshoe-shaped ditch [75], was identified in Trench 2 (Fig. 2) enclosing an area at least 6m north-south by 7m east-west. The ditch varied in depth from a relatively shallow scoop of 100-150mm to a deeper well-defined cut of 350-400mm. In places it appeared almost to “disappear” into the London Clay through which it was cut. This was not entirely surprising as its fill was largely composed of London Clay, perhaps originating from natural silting of the ditch, rather than deliberate backfilling. The fill contained no cultural material, making dating extremely difficult. A small, undated, rounded pit [86] was excavated to the south-west, which appeared to be on the same alignment as the curving ditch. A shallow indentation in the base of the pit may be the remains of a post-hole indicating a structural aspect to the feature. Subsequent agricultural activity is likely to have destroyed any potentially contemporary occupation surfaces.

The ditch and post-hole were initially interpreted as being associated with a group of Late Iron Age/Early Roman pits (Fig. 3); although given the lack of cultural material any phasing of these features must be tentative. However this paucity of finds evidence is in marked contrast to the wealth of material from the pits and although it may be argued that the features had differing functions, it seems unlikely that artefactual material would not have been introduced accidentally into the ditch and posthole.

The Late Iron Age/early Roman period

In Trench 2 a sequence of interconnected pits was excavated. These contained fills largely comprised of clay and silt combined with large quantities of charcoal and Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, small fragments of burnt bone, scorched flint fragments, and some ceramic fragments identified as kiln furniture.

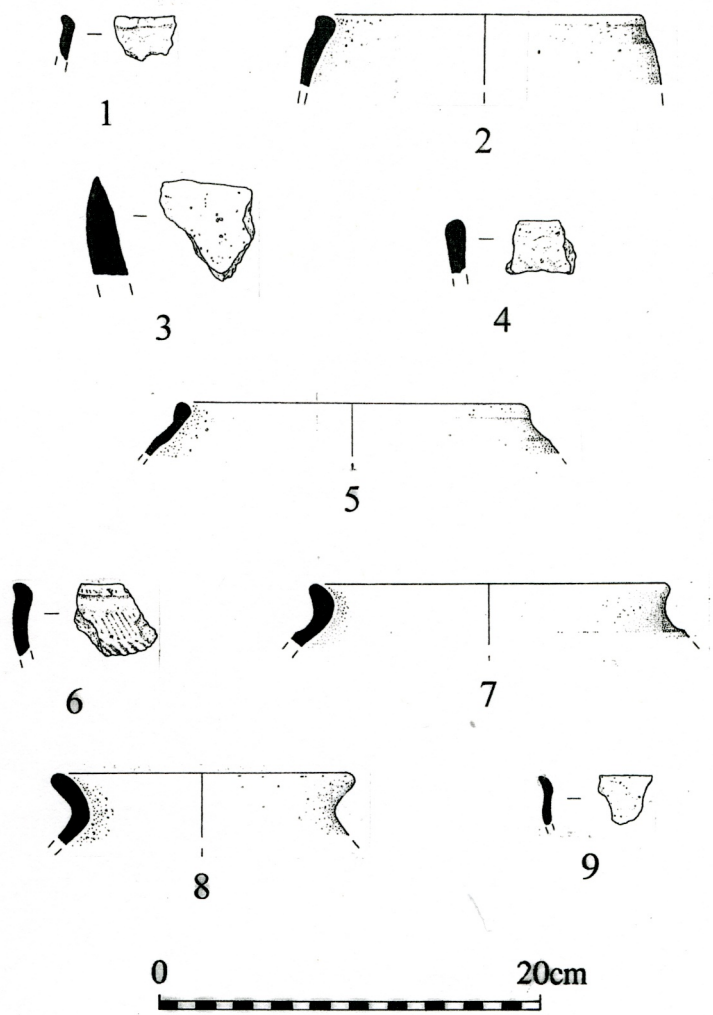

Fig. 4. The pottery: 1-3, pit [20]; 4-9, pit [71]

Nearly all of the pottery recovered from Trench 2 came from these three intercutting pits and provides a sequence of assemblages spanning the period between the Late Iron Age and the Late First Century. The earliest pit [20] produced 83 sherds (734g) of pottery, made up entirely of coarse 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware derived from furrowed bead-rim jars, jars with corrugated necks and storage vessels. Only two rim sherds were present, both of which come from small bead-rimmed jars of Late Iron Age/Pre-Flavian type (Fig. 4,1 & Fig. 4,2). Possible brine-boiling briquetage or pottery kiln furniture was also recovered (Fig. 4,3). Pit [71] produced 253 sherds (1230g) of badly comminuted pottery, all but one sherd of which were of coarse 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware and derived from at least five bead-rim jars, five everted rim jars and a small carinated cup (Fig. 4,4-9). Some of the jar body-sherds were furrowed and the overwhelming bulk of the fragments oxidised soft

reddish-brown to orange (91 per cent by sherd count, 78 per cent by weight). The one none-grog-tempered sherd was in a wheel-turned gritty grey ware from a Canterbury closed form. The presence of this piece and a flake of Roman tile indicate that the pit was backfilled after c. AD. 50, but not necessarily long after. Pit [73] produced 444 sherds (3720g) and pottery in this assemblage was once again dominated by coarse 'Belgic' grog-tempered wares (99 per cent by both sherd count and weight) and including fragments from a variety of furrowed bead-rim and other jar forms (Fig. 5,10-18). The other wares comprised two fragments from a butt-beaker in Gallo-Belgic whiteware (c. AD. 43-80) and a rim sherd from a lid in oxidised sandy Canterbury fabric (Fig. 6,19). Forty-two fragments from a loomweight, part of a crude ceramic ring (Fig 6,20) and four sherds of briquetage from salt containers (eg Fig. 6,21 & Fig. 6,22) were also present. The whole assemblage would appear to be of mid-late first century date.

To the north-west was a further pit [80], with charcoal rich fills, burnt bone and pot, interpreted as being used for the disposal of cooking waste. This feature produced a pottery assemblage dated 50 BC to AD 100 from its secondary fill. The primary fill of this pit produced quantities of charcoal and ash and the largest assemblage of charred plant remains recovered from the site, including emmer and spelt wheat, barley and possibly oat.

In the centre of Trench 15 two intercutting pits were excavated. The broken remains of at least five pots were found in the primary fill of the earlier of these pits [40]. Overall 14 sherds of pottery were recovered from this fill, comprising 13 jar bodysherds in black-brown 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware Fabric B2 and a rim sherd from a lid-seated carinated bowl in grey Canterbury Fabric R5. It is believed that the fragment clusters represent vessels that had been whole when originally placed in the pit. The middle fill of the pit yielded 79 sherds (200g) of pottery (eg Fig. 6,23-25), including 50 small body-sherds from a probable beaker in grey Upchurch Fabric R16. A piece of underfired tile was also present. The upper fill of the pit contained 183 sherds (854 g) of badly comminuted pottery. This assemblage also included fragments from two bead-rim jars (similar to Fig. 6,24), a further sherd from the Upchurch ware beaker, another rim fragment from the Canterbury greyware bowl (Fig. 6,22) and a flake of briquetage. It seems likely from this that the pit was backfilled at some time during the late-first century.

This pit was slightly truncated on its southern edge by a similar feature [60]. This yielded 84 sherds (229g) of badly comminuted pottery. No rims were recovered but 'Belgic' grog-tempered fabrics make up 94 per cent of an assemblage, which also includes a few sherds of grey Upchurch Fabric R16 and coarse Romanised sandy grey ware. A mid to late first-century date seems likely for this material.

The pottery assemblages from the pit features in Trenches 2 and 15 were characterised by an overwhelming predominance of ‘Belgic’ Grog-tempered wares (pit [20], 100 per cent; pit [71], 99 per cent; pit [73], 99 per cent; and pit [60], 94 per cent). Such high percentages are indicative of very close proximity to a source of such pottery and this is further emphasised by the presence of possible fragments of kiln furniture in pits [20] and [73] (Fig. 4,3 & Fig. 6,20).

Alongside this native grog-tempered pottery were a number of fragments from small, thin-walled salt containers, some with the distinctive pinkish-purple colouration characteristic of the low-temperature firing of clay vessels where salt

water has been used in the forming process. These fragments, coupled with the proximity of the site to the coast, further suggest that there was a nearby brine-boiling site. The crushing of briquetage from salt production would yield a steady supply of filler for 'Belgic' Grog-tempered ware potters and it may be that the two industries were associated.

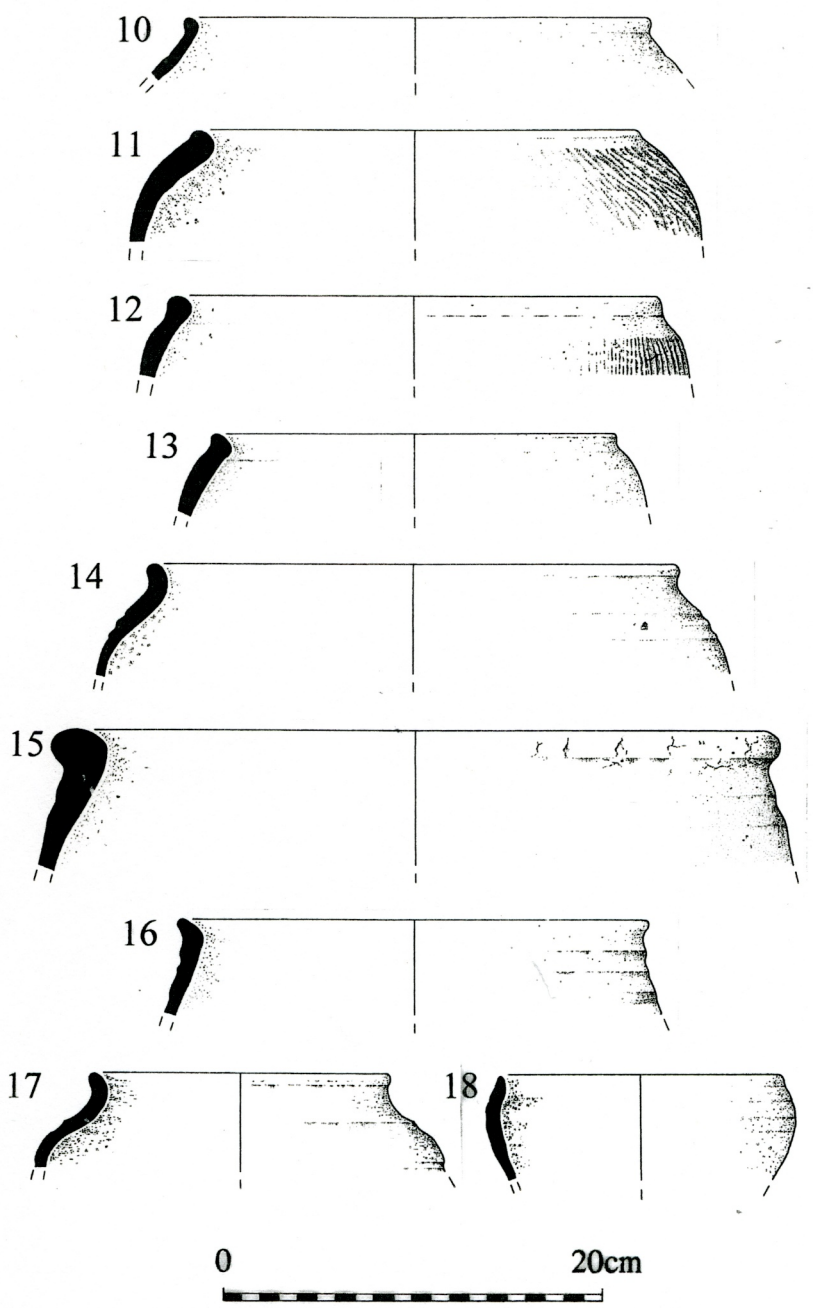

Fig. 5. The pottery: 10-18, pit

A correlation between the simple technology involved in the production of such ‘Belgic’ pottery and that of salt-production, has been noted by Swan, who recognised a similarity in furnaces and kiln furniture between salt production sites and early pottery kilns (Swan 1984, 56). The overall distribution of such early kilns and pre-fabricated kiln furniture coincides closely with the distribution of ‘Belgic’ (La Tène III) pottery in Britain, and includes the area around the Thames Estuary (ibid.).

In spite of the recovered pottery assemblage there were no obvious candidates for a kiln among the features excavated though it was originally believed that pits [40]/[60] might represent kiln remains, on the basis of the stepped profile of pit [40] and the presence of the remains of five pots apparently deliberately set in its base. If such features were kilns it seems most likely that they represent simple single chambered kilns or pit clamps, as identified and discussed by Swan (ibid., 53). However the lack of obvious in situ burning, in the form of scorching of the clay, or any evidence of a lining, would seem to preclude this interpretation.

Numerous examples of Romano-British kilns with raised oven floors have been excavated in the North and East Kent areas (a sunken kiln with raised oven floor at New Ash Green was recently reported in Archaeologia Cantiana; Monaghan and Connell, 1986) as well as across the River Thames in Essex (most notably at Mucking; Jones and Rodwell 1973). There are also a lesser number of more basic kiln forms without the raised oven floor.

The large possible pond to the east of the pits, although not definitely contemporary, may represent an associated feature. This apparently shallow, clay lined depression may have originated as a quarry for clay. However this may equally represent a later feature, possibly a field pond used for the watering of cattle.

Evidence of Romano-British occupation is known from previous archaeological excavations in and around the Chestfield area. During construction of a new housing estate in Chestfield in 1984, building work revealed Iron Age/Roman features from which a quantity of ceramic material was recovered (Blockley 1987). A suggested Romano-British industrial complex, with evidence of kilns and local pottery manufacturing, was identified at Site 11 on the north side of Owl Hatch Way, north-east of Chestfield, during the most recent Thanet Way construction works (Canterbury Archaeological Trust 1996). Close to the site, only 200m to the north, recent excavations at Churchwood Drive revealed evidence for a structure dated to the pre-‘Belgic’ Late Iron Age (circa 300-100 BC) with indications of occupation continuing into the early first century AD provided by the recovery of sherds of ‘Belgic’ pottery. A series of contemporary boundary/drainage ditches were interpreted as representing evidence for a Late Iron Age field system (Allen 1999).

An assemblage of pottery was recovered from the fill of pit [67]. The 36 rather badly broken-up sherds (146g) of pottery from this feature are clearly of somewhat later date than the assemblages so far discussed. Eighty per cent of the sherds are in soapy Transitional Belgic/Native Coarse Ware Fabric R1.2 dated c.AD.70-175 (Pollard 1987, 298) and include two everted jar rims. Two sherds from a c.AD.130-200 dated pie-dish in BB2 Fabric R14 were also present and indicate a late-second-century date for the overall assemblage.

Eleven samples from the Late Iron Age/Roman transitional features were examined for charred plant remains. Emmer and/or spelt wheat (Triticum dicoccum/spelta) were the main cereals represented (present in 6 out of 13 samples). Unfortunately most of the glume bases were too poorly preserved to determine which of the two-hulled wheats was predominant, but both are typically found on Iron Age and Roman sites across the British Isles. Barley was also positively identified in two of the samples. A single oat was tentatively identified,

but this may have been a weed species. Possible bread-type wheat was also present, but the grains were too distorted to be certain of the identification. All of these taxa have been recovered from other sites of this period, and no unusual identifications were made.

Chaff fragments (glume bases, spikelet forks and barley rachis fragments) and small weed seeds were present in small numbers, and this may have been fine sievings from cereal processing that had been used for tinder or fuel. The weed taxa were typical plants of cultivated and disturbed ground, with the only notable taxon being blinks (Montia fontana ssp. minor). This plant grows in a range of damp habitats and is often found in seasonally wet hollows. Its presence (albeit slight) does suggest that the cereals were grown locally.

In general the samples were remarkably free from charred material for a site of this period. The Iron Age and Roman periods are often said to be a time of agricultural intensification, and settlement sites frequently produce high concentrations of charred crop processing waste. Clearly, this site (or at least, the areas sampled for this report) was not located close to an area where crop-processing activities were taking place. If pottery manufacture and salt production were taking place locally, crop-processing waste was not being used in any quantity to fuel these industries.

The poor state of preservation of many of the cereals and glume bases (chaff) suggests that plough damage and weathering may have caused the loss of some material. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the primary fills of pits [80] and [40] contained charred plant remains whilst the upper fills did not and also by the excavation records which indicate plough damage, in particular to the upper profiles of cut features. Numerous modern rootlets were noted throughout indicating that bioturbation may also have detrimentally affected survival. However, the scarcity of charcoal in all of the samples indicates that burnt waste had never been deposited in large quantities on the site. It is likely that the small quantities of cereal grains, chaff and weed seeds represent the low-level disposal of domestic waste, possibly during manuring of the fields.

The Medieval and Post-Medieval periods

In Trench 1 a shallow, sub-circular feature cut the London Clay deposit and contained a small quantity of archaeological finds, mainly brick and tile fragments of a late medieval or post-medieval date. This feature may represent a fence post marking a field boundary, although it seems more probable that it results from a “natural” event such as the disturbance of the London Clay by the root action of a small tree or shrub.

Varying amounts of medieval and post-medieval finds mainly of brick and tile, and some domestic pottery were recovered from the topsoil deposits of the site and from the surface cleaning of the underlying natural clay.

Abraded fragments of similarly dated pottery were recovered from the topsoil in Trench 8, and the cleaning of the disturbed upper surface of the underlying natural clay (essentially the lower interface of the topsoil deposit) in Trenches 2, 6, 7, 8, 14, 15 and 17. This assemblage was composed largely of unglazed sandy fabrics with grey cores and oxidised surfaces, identified as being associated with the Tyler

Hill industry, which began production around 1150-75 AD. As the pottery from these contexts is largely unglazed and not highly decorated it is suggested that these fabrics date to between the mid twelfth to mid thirteenth century. Where diagnostic sherds could be identified the forms consisted of bowls, jugs and jars.

Late medieval pottery was recovered from cleaning of the remnants of topsoil from the surface of the natural in Trenches 3,10, 15 and 16. The fabrics represented were again products of the Tyler Hill industry but were fired at higher temperature than the earlier wares. The forms were largely jugs, with the base of a baluster jug being recovered from the surface of the natural in Trench 3. Bowls and the rim of a hexagonal bowl were recovered from Trench 10.

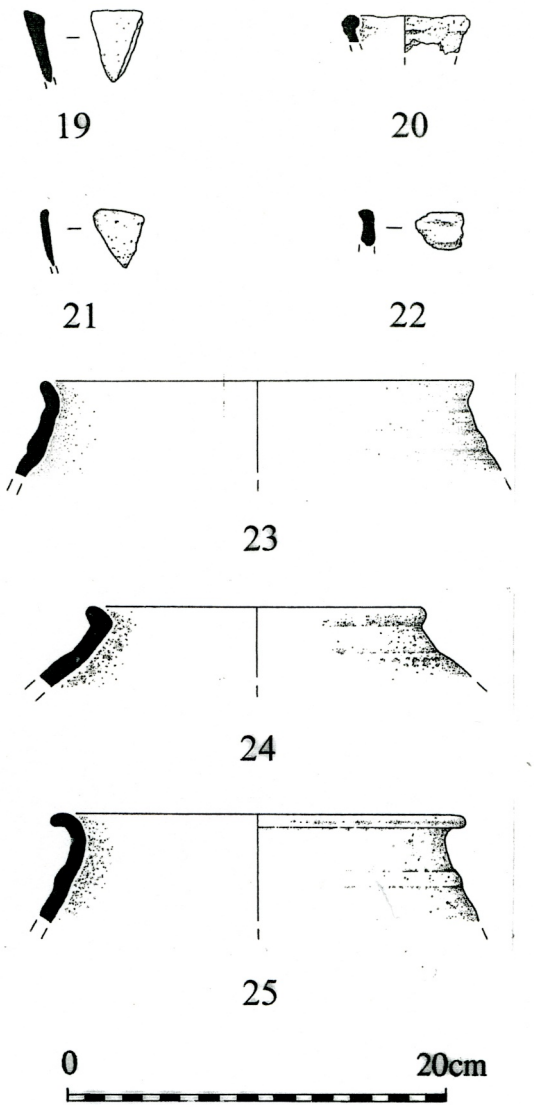

Fig. 6. The pottery: 19-22, pit [73]; 23-25, pit [40]

Table 1. Illustrated Pottery

Fig. 4 no 1	Trench 2	Context [10]	Fill of [20]	Simple undeveloped bead-rim from small jar in grey-black Fabric B2. Ext.rim diameter 120 mm. Similar rim to Phase 1 example at the Marlowe Car Park site in Canterbury (Pollard 1995,Fig.276-118). Thompson Type C1-1 (1982). Late Iron Age.
Fig. 4 no 2	Trench 2	Context [10]	Fill of [20]	Another undeveloped example in an oxidised orange-brown version of the same Fabric B2. Ext.rim diameter 140 mm.
Fig. 4 no 3	Trench 2	Context [10]	Fill of [20]	Fragment from edge of crude slab in reddish-pink Fabric B.2 fired grey.
Fig. 4 no 4	Trench 2	Context [70]	Fill of [71]	Hole-mouthed jar of Thompson Form C3 in lumpy black Fabric B2. Late Iron Age.
Fig. 4 no 5	Trench 2	Context [70]	Fill of [71]	Bead-rim jar with slightly carinated shoulder in similar fabric. Ext. rim diameter 130 mm.
Fig. 4 no 6	Trench 2	Context [70]	Fill of [71]	Bead rim from diagonally-combed jar in patchy brown-black Fabric B2.
Fig. 4 no 7	Trench 2	Context [70]	Fill of [71]	Rim from jar of Thompson Form B2-3 (1982) fired grey-black.
Fig. 4 no 8	Trench 2	Context [70]	Fill of [71]	Everted jar rim in orange Fabric B2. Ext.rim diameter 140mm.
Fig. 4 no 9	Trench 2	Context [70]	Fill of [71]	Rim sherd from small, waisted carinated cup in similar patchy grey-brown fabric. Three small fragments of briquetage are also present.
Fig. 5 no 10	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Bead-rim jar with off-set shoulder in lumpy grey-black Fabric B2 with orange patches. Ext.rim diameter 110 mm. One of two.
Fig. 5 no 11	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Simple hole-mouthed vessel rim sherd with rudimentary bead and diagonal furrowing, in soapy black Fabric B2. Ext.rim diameter 200 mm. Similar to no. 4 and possibly from the same vessel
Fig. 5 no 12	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Bead-rim jar in similar fabric but with vertical furrowing. Ext. rim diameter 200 mm.
Fig. 5 no 13	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Plain bead-rim jar in grey Fabric B2 fired black with brown margins. Ext.rim diameter 180 mm.
Fig. 5 no 14	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Jar with corrugated shoulder in soapy black Fabric B2 with brown margins. Ext.rim diameter 140 mm.
Fig. 5 no 15	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Massive bead-rim jar with neck-cordon in grey Fabric B2 with up-to 2 mm orange grog filler and pink margins.
Fig. 5 no 16	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Bead-rim jar with corrugated shoulder in black Fabric B2.
Fig. 5 no 17	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Rim sherd from pedestalled jar in grey Fabric B2 fired black with brown margins. Ext.rim diameter 120 mm.
Fig. 5 no 18	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Corrugated bowl fragment in grey-black grog-tempered fabric with exceptionally-coarse black and white grog filler.
Fig. 6 no 19	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Lid fragment in wheel-turned very-fine-sanded Canterbury greyware fired rough reddish-brown.
Fig. 6 no 20	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Fragment from small ring or cylinder in handmade patchy brown/black Fabric B2. This crudely made item may be part of a pot spacer used in a kiln or other pottery-firing structure.
Fig. 6 nos 21-22	Trench 2	Context [72]	Fill of [73]	Fragment from small handmade cup or crucible in soft grey-buff fabric with grit, grog and organic filler. Possibly part of a salt container.
Fig. 6 no 23	Trench 15	Context [41]	Fill of [40]	Cordoned jar in soapy black-brown, grog-tempered ware Fabric B1. Ext.rim diameter 200 mm
Fig. 6 no 24	Trench 15	Context [41]	Fill of [40]	Bead-rim jar in handmade brown-black Fabric B2. One of two.
Fig. 6 no 25	Trench 15	Context [31]	Fill of [40]	Necked and cordoned jar in black 'Belgic' grog-tempered ware Fabric B1. Ext.rim diameter 150 mm. One of three.

Post-medieval pottery was recovered from Trenches 2, 5, 7, 12, 15 and 20. The majority of this appeared to be hard fired, seventeenth century glazed redwares, but a sixteenth century redware vessel fragment was recovered from Trench 2, a rim sherd of a late seventeenth century London stoneware jug came from Trench 7 and a red earthenware dish with possible slip decoration was from Trench 20. The pottery occurred as mainly small to medium sized sherds and the fragments were mostly abraded. This is consistent with the recovery of material from an area that has been under plough or pasture. Although no definite concentrations were noted the pottery, especially that dated to the post-medieval period, was mainly recovered from trenches located towards the north-west of the site, reflecting the concentration of activity noted in earlier phases. This may be a result of peripheral activity associated with farm buildings towards the north-west, as demonstrated on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey and later maps.

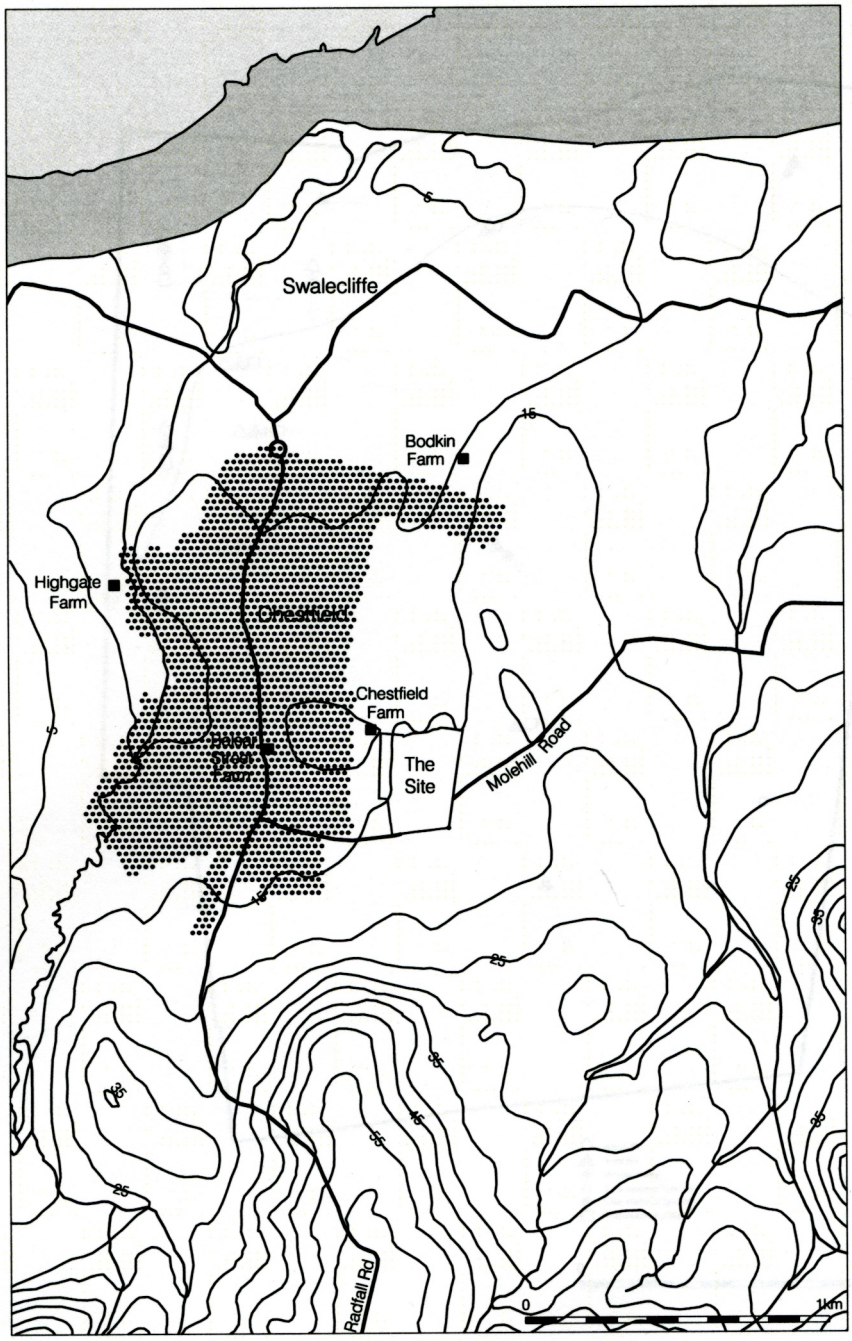

Fig. 7. The site in relation to topography, showing extent of modern-day Chestfield, Chestfield Farm, Balser Street Farm, Highgate Farm and Bodkin Farm

Chestfield may have Saxon origins and is perhaps the unknown parcel of land described in *Domesday* as being within the hundred of Whitstable and adjoining Swalecliffe *(Soanclive*), worked by four *'bordarers'* or smallholders (Allen 2000). Anglo-Saxon and later medieval Chestfield appears to have been organised as a manorial estate divided into four farms, all of which survived into the twentieth century, under the names Chestfield Farm, Balsar Street Farm, Highgate Farm and Bodkin Farm *(ibid.*) (see Fig. 7). It has been suggested that medieval Chestfield was an extensive and important agricultural settlement *(ibid.*) and that the focus for such a settlement would have been on better-drained ground, with wetter areas being used as arable land or pasture.

Medieval activity has been identified during excavations approximately 200m to the north of the site at Churchwod Drive. This included evidence of a colluvium-filled hollow way, a possible medieval precursor to modern Radfall Road, with a sunken floored structure, possibly a lean-to, ditches and an extensive midden, suggesting that the site was located at some distance from the centre of the settlement *(ibid.*). Large quantities of pottery, again mostly of the Tyler Hill type, were recovered from these excavations and it is possible that some of the medieval pottery recovered from the ploughsoil at Molehill Road may have derived from further north being transported by downslope wash, or manuring activities. This evidence further confirms the theory that during the medieval, as well as earlier periods, the site was close to an important focus of occupation, but located on peripheral agricultural land.

Acknowledgements

The Molehill Road excavations were generously funded by Bryant Homes (Weald) Ltd. Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Ltd. acted as archaeological consultant. Richard Cross of Canterbury Archaeological Trust monitored the site on behalf of the local planning authority. The archaeological project was managed for PCA Ltd by Gary Brown and supervised by Kevin Wooldridge. Tim Carew, Rob Cross, Dave Dobson, Ann George, Gavin Glover, Douglas Killock, Alan Aitken-Rae and Hanne Rendall-Wooldridge undertook the site work. Photography was by Tudor Owen-Morgan. Illustrations are by John Lowe, Jo Thomas, Sally Pickard and Cate Davis. Contributions to post-excavation analysis of the site have been made by Phillip Armitage, Barry Bishop, Wendy Carruthers, Chris Jarrett, Malcolm Lyne, and Nigel Macpherson-Grant. Thanks to all concerned.

Bibliography

Allen, T., 1999*. Interim report on the archaeological works recently completed on land east of Churchwood Drive, Chestfield, Whitstable*, unpublished report for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

Blockley, P., 1987. 'Canterbury Archaeological Trust Round-up', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 104, 321.

Canterbury Archaeological Trust, 1996. ‘Interim Report on Excavations in Advance of the Dualling of the A253 between Monkton and Mount Pleasant, Thanet’, *Archaeologia Cantiana* 116, 305-310.

Hawkins, D., 1998. *The Drove, Whitstable. A Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment,* CgMs unpublished report.

Edmonds, M., 1995. *Stone Tools and Society: Working Stone in Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain,* Batsford, London.

Jones, M.U. & Rodwell, W.J., 1973. ‘The Romano-British Pottery Kilns at Mucking’ in *Essex Archaeology and History 5* (Third Series), 13-47.

Monaghan, J. & Connell, E., 1986. ‘The Kiln at New Ash Green’*, Archaeologia Cantiana* 103, 241- 243.

Swan, V.G., 1984*. The Pottery Kilns of Roman Britain.* HMSO, London