SWINE, SALT AND SEAFOOD: A CASE STUDY
OF ANGLO-SAXON AND EARLY MEDIEVAL
SETTLEMENT IN NORTH-EAST KENT

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Archaeological works undertaken during the summer of 1999 by the
Canterbury Archaeological Trust in Chestfield, a mile east of
Whitstable, exposed the remains of ditched enclosures dating to the
Late Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. Animal bones, principally
of pig, along with other domestic refuse, including large quantities of
datable potsherds, were recovered, suggesting that the enclosures
were animal pens (almost certainly swine pens). The Chestfield enclos-
ures were situated close to dwellings which probably comprised the
eastern part of the embryonic settlement. The results of documentary
research were consistent with the archaeological findings in showing
that Chestfield originated as a small, impoverished Mid to Late
Anglo-Saxon settlement (then apparently unnamed) which eventually
developed into a prosperous manorial estate.

The archaeological works exposed part of a droveway which led
into the enclosure complex and which separated it from the dwell-
ings. The droveway appeared to represent the northern termination of
Radfall Road, an ancient road surviving to the north and east as an
extensive but only partly intact embanked woodland track (Map 1).
Archaeological and documentary evidence suggest that the Chest-
field drove road/Radfall Road, along with the Radfall, another em-
banked woodland trackway, formed part of an Anglo-Saxon and early
medieval road system, and that these roads may have originated as
Anglo-Saxon droveways leading from small agricultural settlements
such as Chestfield to the swine pastures of the Blean. It may also be
inferred from documentary evidence that the Radfall served as a
major salt way, as well as for the transport of seafood, and that many
of the other drove roads extending south to the Blean from the North
Kent Coast were similarly used.

Radfall Road enters the Blean south of Chestfield at Broomfield
Gate, from which point it survives variously as an embanked way, a
modern tarmacked road, a footpath and an embanked forest trail. Between Chestfield and Broomfield Gate, two linear embanked tracts of woodland, Rabbit Shaw and Crow Park (see below), appear to represent surviving sections of the old drove way. South of Broomfield Gate, Radfall Road extends as far as Gypsy Corner, where it turns west, crossing the parish of Blean and then continuing as an embanked way into North Bishopsden Wood, beyond the main Canterbury/Whitstable Road, a total distance of approximately seven miles. From a place called Crooked Oak in Bishopsden Wood it is no longer traceable. The Radfall runs north-east from Park Farm at Tyler Hill through Thornden Wood towards Herne via Bleangate. Hackington Road, a modern road, leads to Canterbury to the north and also joins Radfall Road with the Radfall. However, modern Hackington Road follows the approximate route of a still clearly visible earlier embanked way.

Map 1 Churchwood Drive, Chestfield: site location in relation to the Blean area.

118
The archaeological and historical background

The archaeological site at Chestfield lies on the Bogshole Levels, immediately north of the Blean, a largely wooded London Clay upland which in turn lies north of the Stour valley. The levels were long considered to be of low archaeological potential but have been shown by recent investigations to have been widely occupied during the later Bronze and Iron Age, usually in the form of small, short-lived agricultural settlements (Allen 1999b). Settlement activity appears to have declined dramatically during the Later Iron Age (c. 300 BC to c. 150 BC) but resumed on a large scale during the Late pre-Roman Iron Age (c. 150 BC - AD 43). However, an extensive settlement, which was continuously occupied from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Roman period, occupied high ground on the western margin of the levels just south of Whitstable, and a Late Bronze/Early Iron Age settlement, subsequently re-occupied during the Late Iron Age, was situated at Highstead, on the eastern margin of the levels (Macpherson-Grant, forthcoming). During the period immediately following the Roman invasion, the levels were apparently largely depopulated.

Little evidence exists for the re-occupation of the levels during the Early Anglo-Saxon period. During the Late Anglo-Saxon period, Chestfield was probably part of a 'multiple estate', then of a 'fragmented estate' (Reynolds 1999, 83-4). Up to and beyond the Norman invasion, it almost certainly comprised the unnamed part of the ecclesiastical parish of Swalecliffe (see below), referred to as a 'yoke' in the following:

Vitalis also holds 1 yoke from the Bishop in this Hundred; he has ½ plough in lordship, with 4 smallholders [Latin ‘bordarii’] who pay 6s. Land for ½ plough. Woodland, 10 pigs. Value before 1066 and later 10s, now 20s. Wulfsi held it from King Edward. (Domesday Book 1086, 5, 140).

The Hundred referred to here is Whitstable Hundred. The modern town of Whitstable was originally known as 'Whitstable Street', a name derived from its hundred name. It is noteworthy, and again indicative of its Anglo-Saxon origin (or earlier), that the Radfall comprises part of the boundary between the adjacent Hundreds of Whitstable and Reculver (Morris 1983, Map 2).

Following Odo’s disgrace in 1088, Swalecliffe appears to have reverted to the crown, to be sold off in parts, the unnamed estate at Chestfield being one (Hasted 1800, VIII, 521). During the Early Medieval period and beyond, the Chestfield estate continued to be divided into four farms, with Chestfield Manor House, at present a
private house of fourteenth-century origin (West 1988, 130, 139) probably marking the centre of the manorial estate. One farm appears to have been attached to the manor house itself, the others being attached to Balsar Street Farmhouse, Highgate Farmhouse and Bodkin Farmhouse. It is possible that these four medieval/post medieval farms represent the same holdings worked by the four 'bordari' during the reign of Edward the Confessor. If so, a remarkable example of long-term continuity in terms of land division is evident.

Wallenberg (1934, 493) proposes a Norman origin for the name 'Chestfield' (Cesteville, possibly 'Castle Town'), other medieval variants being Cestuill (1242-3), Chesteuille (1278) and Cestevile (1292). In 1346 Chesteuille appears in assessments made for the investiture of the Black Prince (Greenstreet 1876, 116). In the reign of Richard II (1377-1399) the property passed to the Roper family and in 1523 was described in John Roper's will (see above). It remained with the Roper family until 1723 when, on the death of Katherine Roper, it passed to her husband, William Strickland. On his death in 1788 it passed to Sir Edward Dering and Sir Rowland Wynne (Hasted 1800, VIII, 522).

Late medieval and post medieval Chestfield had a droveway (today called 'the Drove'), which was used to take livestock to the woodland pastures of the Blean via Shrub Hill and Broomfield Gate. However, the droveway further to the east exposed during excavation (see below) and the Radfall Road, of which it probably formed part, almost certainly represent an earlier route to the Blean, as well as the highway to Canterbury, via Hackington Road, as previously discussed. Radfall Road also led to the suggestively named Chestfield Revel, 650m to the south, 'revel' denoting a parish festival, feast or fair.

Rabbit Shaw, a long, thin area of woodland lying immediately south-east of the Area I excavation, contains two parallel earth banks and two associated ditches extending north and downwards from the Blean upland. The form of these structures and the fact that they lie on the extrapolated line of Radfall Road north of Broomfield Gate if it is extended northward suggest that Rabbit Shaw originated at part of Radfall Road. The same origin may be ascribed to Crow Park, another long, thin tract of woodland containing two parallel earth banks which lies on the same line 500m to the south.

The name 'Radfall Road' is probably relatively modern, deriving from 'Rodfall', meaning 'a rod's clearance of woodland' (Parish and Shaw 1888, 125). However, a map dated 1718 (Shire 1998, 12) names the western part of Radfall Road as Mearencold Lane. Whatever its original name, documentary evidence suggests that the road predates
the banks which enclose it, embankment having taken place largely in the thirteenth century during disputes over property rights between, amongst others, St Sepulchre’s Priory and Eastbridge Hospital in Canterbury (Wheaten and Maylam 1988; Holmes and Wheaten 2002, 32-3). This evidence is consistent with the original great size of the earth banks associated with Radfall Road, the Radfall and Hackington Road, as such sizable banks are considered to be typical of the medieval period (Rackham 1986, 98-100). Also suggestive of an ancient origin for Radfall Road is the fact that, south of Broomfield Gate, the road delineates the ecclesiastical parish boundary between Swalecliffe and Thornden Manor, the latter being a detached part of Dunkirk Ville (see below).

Near the modern village of Blean an embanked section of Radfall Road passes by Amery Court Farm, where the remains of a medieval moated manor survive as a ditch-enclosed tennis court. The name ‘Amery Court’ is said to derive from ‘L’Amery-court’, this being ‘a corruption for the almonry court, from its being given in alms to St. Sepulchre’s nunnery’ (Hasted 1800, VIII, 524). An alternative suggestion is that it was so called because the Cathedral Almoner was responsible for managing the surrounding estate (Holmes and Wheaten 2002, 55, 57). The latter is consistent with Hasted’s observation (1800, VIII, 525) that ‘there are within the boundaries of this parish, four several districts of land, which are reputed to be within the liberty and ville of Christ-Church, in Canterbury, and to have been so time out of mind’.

Hasted (1800, III, 620) was almost certainly referring to the Radfall’s eastern extension beyond the Blean when he stated, in reference to Ridgeway Farm (which lies east of Herne), ‘by this farm, which from hence acquired its name, the High Road from Canterbury to Reculver led in ancient times’ (the Radfall probably joined the old Roman Road between Reculver and Canterbury, north of Maypole). Similarly, a deed dated 1730 states ‘... this Quit Rent is mentioned to be paid by the Roper Heirs for 160 acres of Land lying between Swackliffe Highway & the old Highway called the Rod Fall ...’ (Canterbury Cathedral Archive, Box 50). A survey of the Archbishop’s woods dated 1759 discusses ‘a slip of wood ... formerly the road from Hearn to Canterbury, which is now called the Rodfall; this old road goes between this wood and a wood called Thornden’ (Lambeth Palace, TS 5).

Here we see the Radfall, still remembered as a highway rather than a woodland track, being used to define parcels of land during the eighteenth century. However, both the Radfall and Radfall Road had previously been used to delineate many of the local parish boundaries (see below) and probably, before the re-introduction of Christianity
to South-East Britain, the local boundaries of the Kentish kings’ royal estates. In the same year or thereabouts (605) that St Augustine’s Abbey was established outside the walls of Canterbury, King Ethelbert issued a charter (Augusta regia) granting ‘the vill [estate] by name Sturygao [Sturry], otherwise called Chisteley [Chislet]’ to the monastery (Davis 1934, 10), indicating that at that time Sturry and Chislet comprised a single royal estate. The Radfall appears to have delineated the western boundary of that estate, assuming that this boundary corresponded with the western boundaries of the parishes into which the estate was subsequently divided. If the Radfall marked the original western boundary of the undivided estate of Sturry, it may be inferred that it necessarily marked the eastern boundary of the adjacent royal estate of Blean (see below) before its subsequent subdivision into the parishes of Blean and Dunkirk Ville.

As previously mentioned, the western part of the embanked section of Radfall Road terminates at Crooked Oak in North Bishopsden Wood, west of the main Canterbury-Whitstable road. The wooded area here lies in Dunkirk Ville, which was a detached part of Westgate Parish, itself attached to Staplegate Borough, now called ‘the Borough’ in Canterbury, and said to have been a pagan ‘oratory’ granted by King Ethelbert to St Augustine on his arrival as a sanctuary (Hasted 1801, I, 292-3; Davis 1934, 5). Dunkirk Ville, along with the rest of the Blean, probably originated as part of a single, large royal estate in the early Anglo-Saxon period (Hasted 1800, IX, 3-4), but parts of the estate were subsequently granted by King Ethelbert to Augustine, later to be attached to St Augustine’s Abbey. Later, in 791, King Offa granted other parts, called ‘Bocholt’ and ‘Blean Heanric’, to Chist Church Priory (Hasted 1800, IX, 4). The origin of ‘Heanric’ in the latter is unknown but ‘Bocholt’ probably originated as ‘Bookholt’, otherwise ‘wood held by royal charter’ (see Gelling 1993, 196, 267). It is possible that ‘Bocholt’ represents the origin of ‘Bogshole’, a name surviving now only in the names of two roads, both called Bogshole Lane and both leading to the Blean. During the latter part of Henry II’s reign (1154-1189), the parts of Dunkirk Ville now known as South and North Bishopsden Wood were granted to the Archbishop of Canterbury (Hasted 1800, IX, 3), this probably explaining the origin of the woods’ names.

The Blean remains the second largest wooded area in Kent, with many names within it (North Bishopsden Wood, Ellenden Wood, Thornden Wood, Denstroude Wood, Bossenden Wood and Denstead Wood) suggesting its use as swine pasture during the Anglo-Saxon period (Everitt 1976, 16-19). Indeed, the first written appearance of the name ‘Blean’ (in respect of a grant of land for swine pasture to Thanet
SWINE, SALT AND SEAFOOD

Minster) occurs in Anglo-Saxon Charter B.C.S. 141 (AD 724) as: ‘pascum porcorum ... on Blean anum wrede’ (Holmes and Wheaten 2002, 133).

In order to gain access to the swine pastures of North Bishopsden Wood, the swineherds of the detached part of Dunkirk Ville would have had to drive their pigs for some seven miles through land in the parish of Blean not held by the monks of the Priory or the Archbishop. Given the thirteenth-century date for Radfall Road’s banks, and assuming that the banks were built to such a great height in order to confine livestock to the road, it would appear that the use of swine pastures (and associated rights of pannage) may have continued on the Blean far longer than elsewhere in Kent. Alternatively, and assuming that the swine pastures had fallen out of use by that time, it may be suggested that the earth banks were erected to prevent unauthorised access by cart to the timber resources for which the woodlands later came to be highly valued.

Initial royal and subsequent ecclesiastical control of the Blean during the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods (Hasted 1800, IX, 3) would appear to explain the presence of entrances into the Blean known as ‘gates’ (Broomfield Gate, Dargate, Bleangate, Sweechagate, Clangate, Cheesecourt Gate, Boyden Gate and possibly ‘The Gate’ on Watling Street), these probably being officially-designated entrances to the Blean originally associated with rights of pannage (for example, Boyden Gate is approached from the east by at least five drove roads: Gilling Drove, Tipper Drove, May Drove, Snake Drove and Fowler’s Drove). It would appear that the use of gated entrances into the Blean survived into the medieval period and perhaps beyond. Hasted (1800, VIII, 530) makes the following observation: ‘In the rentals of the manor of Blean, there is mention made of the payment of gate silver (a custom not often met with). It seems to be payment made by the tenants of the manor, for the repair of the gates leading to and from the Blean, to prevent their cattle from straying and being lost’.

As previously mentioned, it was also proposed by Hasted (1800, IX, 3-4) that the Blean originally comprised a single large royal estate. If so, the approximate boundaries of the Blean as a whole were probably marked by the positions of the gates. Hasted’s proposal is consistent with the evidence of Anglo-Saxon Charter B.C.S. 496 (AD 858), in which it is stated that part of the Blean which had clearly not been granted to an ecclesiastical body was a ‘silba regis’ (king’s wood). In Charter B.C.S 496 (AD 858), we read of a royal grant of property described as ‘et Febresham i sealtern et ii wena gang mid cyninges wenum to Blean them wiada’ (‘at Faversham, one salthouse [works?] and two wagons to go with the king’s wagon into the Blean’). The use

123
of the gates as a means of controlling access into the Blean is consistent with the following statement in Anglo-Saxon Charter B.C.S. 507 (AD 863), in which the Blean, or part of it, is referred to as ‘regis communione’ (king’s common):

... a salt evaporation works and seasalt enclosure, with attached one cote [as in cottage and perhaps the origin of the word ‘coterell’], in that place called Herewic, and passage for four waggons to the king’s wood, for the six weeks after Pentecost, in the place where other men enter the wood held as king’s common.

While access to the swine pastures of the Blean for outlying Anglo-Saxon settlements was the primary purpose of Radfall Road and Radfall, the transportation of salt and, as discussed in more detail below, seafood, were almost certainly additional (and economically vital) uses. It is noteworthy in this respect that the Chislet Marshes, west of the Wantsum Channel and immediately east of Herne had the biggest concentration of salt pans when Domesday Book was compiled. Whitstable (‘Nortone’) was the third biggest producer (after the ‘royal vill’ of Milton Regis). It may therefore be inferred that the Radfall was a major saltway.

Salt production appears to have continued on the levels north of the Blean into the medieval period and beyond. Archaeological excavation of two of the many mounds situated on the Seasalter Levels, west of Whitstable, showed them to be the remains of medieval salt works predating the early fourteenth century (Thompson 1956, 44-67), and it is likely that some or many of the other mounds in that area have a similar origin. For salt not used locally for, amongst other things, the salting of pig meat (see below), the principal market was probably at Salt Hill in Canterbury (Urry 1967, 108). Large-scale salt production on the Seasalter Levels ceased in 1325, when the salt-marsh margin necessary for such production was destroyed by the construction of a sea wall following a series of great storms (Dugdale 1772, 20; L. C. 1887, i, 139-49).

It may also be assumed that the Radfall Road and the Radfall were just two of many such drove and/or salt ways and that their survival is due to their use as boundaries and their subsequent embankment in order to enclose medieval ecclesiastic woodland holdings. Indeed, by the end of the thirteenth century, the two roads may have been redundant in regard to their original use. Elsewhere in Kent, the large-scale practice of pannage had all but ceased by the end of the eleventh century as more efficient methods of pig keeping were adopted (Rackham 1986, 122). The practice may have persisted rather longer on the Blean but by the thirteenth century the woodlands
were certainly more important as a source of timber, mostly as faggots for fuel (Holmes and Wheaten 2001, 35). This represented the expansion of an industry which almost certainly originated before the Anglo-Saxon period but for which good Anglo-Saxon documentary evidence survives. In addition to the Anglo-Saxon charters quoted above, a charter dated AD 786 (B.C.S. 248) refers to ‘selaernste leallst heaer bi uban et in Blean wuldiring theaer to’, meaning ‘the saltwork enclosures to the north and their associated woodland in Blean’ (the woodland being the source of fuel).

The archaeology

The earliest evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity at Chestfield was recovered from Area 6 (no figure shown), where the upper fill of a large curving prehistoric ditch yielded small quantities of Early and Mid Anglo-Saxon pottery dating to c.450-c.650 and c.575-c.750.

In Area 2 (Fig. 1), at least two phases of activity were identified. The first comprised two parallel gullies, interpreted as the truncated remains of drainage ditches for a drove road linked to a hollow way exposed in Area 1 (see below) and then joining Radfall Road where it survives as Rabbit Shaw. The drove road therefore appears to have

Fig. 1 Plan of Area 2 (extract) showing enclosures and drove road.
represented the northern terminal Radfall Road, as it led directly to
the entrance of a large animal enclosure, the latter represented by a
sub-rectangular arrangement of truncated ditches.

In the centre of Area 2, a large enclosure [A] represented by a long
U-shaped gully was revealed. Two other gullies [B and C] appeared
to form the south-east and south-western parts of the enclosure. Both
of the latter extended southward beyond the limit of excavation,
indicating that only part of the enclosure had been exposed. The gully
fills provided pottery of the Late Anglo-Saxon period (c.850-c.1050)
and early medieval period (c.1050-c.1150), together with small
quantities of animal bone, mostly pig. Gully [B], however, was
aligned with a short gully [D] which lay roughly parallel to, and 2m
east of, the eastern section of the main enclosure. This suggested that
the original enclosure had at some time been enlarged. Also running
parallel to, and 5m west of, the eastern part of the main enclosure was
another short gully [E] which may have represented a remnant of a
separate enclosure. Another E-W aligned linear feature to the south
[Gully F] was similarly interpreted.

A separate gully [G] located to the north-west shared the same N-S
alignment as the main enclosure ditch. In the 5m gap between the two
was another short gully [H]. The arrangement of these features as a
whole suggested an entrance way. The southern part of the U-shaped
enclosure was cut at right angles by another short gully, which
appeared to form part of a late (southern) enclosure. Here a series of
contemporary gullies containing pottery dated to c.1050-c.1100
formed three sides of a rectilinear enclosure which extended south-
ward beyond the excavated area. The enclosure’s northern boundary
appeared to have been created by the re-cutting of the drove road’s
southern drainage ditch. An isolated gully located some 15m to the
east, which also cut the southern side of the drove road, may also have
represented part of a second phase field or enclosure boundary.

In Area 1 (Fig. 2) six discontinuous gullies were part-excavated. At
least three phases of enclosure construction were represented. The
first was a primary phase enclosure represented by a wide N-S gully
containing pottery sherds dated to c.1050-c.1150 and flanked to the
south by an E-W aligned ditch. The ditch adjoined the previously-
discussed hollow way, which was identified as the eastern extension
of the drove road identified in Area 1 and which formed part of
Radfall Road. A possible second enclosure was represented by two
other gullies, again rectilinearly arranged and containing pottery
dated to c.1075-c.1300. A third phase was suggested by three further
gullies forming a rectilinear arrangement and containing pottery
dated to c.1300.

Where the hollow way was exposed in the eastern part of Area 1 it
Fig. 2 Plan of area 1 (extract) showing enclosures, drove road, hollow way and hearth.

contained much domestic rubbish (burnt flints, fragments of daub and bone, along with large quantities of oyster, mussel and whelk shells) as well as 590 potsherds dated to c.1250-c.1300. This suggested that it had fallen out of use by the later part of the thirteenth century and had become a convenient dump for odorous domestic waste for the inhabitants of nearby dwellings. The dumping of waste in this area was apparently already well established because the fill of a ditch which partly underlay the hollow way also contained large quantities of domestic waste. It is possible that the eventual abandonment around 1250 of the postulated northern termination of Radfall Road resulted from the establishment of the shorter route to Broomfield Gate and the Blean via 'the Drove' as discussed above.

To the south-west of the area was a well-constructed hearth consisting of a concave, ash and charcoal-filled depression within a hard-baked clay base. There was no evidence for an associated structure and it may have represented the remains of an external oven, possibly associated with a building situated to the south, beyond the excavated area.

In Area 4 (Fig. 3), 320m to the north, the earliest feature revealed was a substantial N-S aligned prehistoric ditch. However, immediately adjacent to the ditch, and of much later date, were the remains of a sub-rectangular sunken-floored hut measuring 4 x 4m. The floor survived at a depth of 0.2m below present ground surface and contained an internal hearth in the form of a pit, the fill of which
included charcoal, burnt clay and pottery dating to the thirteenth century. Large amounts of pottery dated to c.1250-c.1300 were recovered from the deposits covering the floor. To the south was a midden of oyster, mussel and whelk shells along with a short, shallow drainage channel and a rubbish pit, all of which yielded pottery of thirteenth-century date.

In Area 6 (no figure shown), some 400m north of the animal enclosures and 100m north-west of the hut in Area 4, another medieval ditch was exposed west of, and partly cutting, a Bronze Age ditch. It produced four sherds of Early and Mid Anglo-Saxon ware, two dated to the period c. AD 450/75-c.650 and two, possibly from the same vessel, dated to the period c.575-c.750, thus providing the first, albeit limited, evidence for Early to Mid Anglo-Saxon activity on the site. The ditch also produced 17 medieval potsherds (c.1225-c.1350) and seven (presumably residual) of Mid/Late Bronze Age date, two Roman brick fragments and four Roman tile fragments. This ditch probably functioned as both a boundary and a drainage ditch (as do the present ditches on the site) and was almost certainly part of a medieval field system associated with the hut and with Chestfield to the south during the period c.1200-c.1300. The Roman brick and tile fragments probably derived from a nearby Roman-period site to the west, as the archaeological evaluation exposed no Roman period remains to the north, south or east.
One of the more remarkable finds on the site was made in Area 2 and consisted of a fully-articulated pig burial, radiocarbon-dated to the post-medieval period, and therefore unrelated to the Anglo-Saxon and medieval remains discussed above. The pig, probably a mature sow, occupied an oval pit [2110] adjacent to the southern limit of excavation. The skeleton was laid out on an E-W alignment with its head to the west and the burial pit appeared to have been carefully shaped.

The archaeology in context

The potsherds recovered from Area 6 point towards primary occupation during the Early Anglo-Saxon period and probably supply evidence for the beginnings of settlement activity at Chestfield. Later Anglo-Saxon activity was indicated in Area 2, where Radfall Road was apparently used as a drove road providing a route from a large Late Anglo-Saxon animal enclosure to the swine pastures of the Blean woodlands. The road can also be assumed to have connected Late Anglo-Saxon Chestfield with other small rural settlements to the south and west, and to Canterbury, and to have represented an important local trade route. The second-phase enclosure in Area 2, dated by its associated ceramics to c.1050-c.1150, abutted the drove road, suggesting it remained in use during the early medieval period and pointing to contemporaneity with other enclosures exposed in Area 1. Continuity throughout the Late Anglo-Saxon and Early Norman periods was indicated by the animal enclosures' similarity in alignment and structure throughout several phases of construction.

Pigs were of great economic importance to agricultural communities from the prehistoric period until the eighteenth-century agrarian revolution. Their importance at the time of the Norman invasion is indicated by the common references to pigs in Domesday Book (e.g. see Chestfield above). Swine (originally 'pigs' meant only young swine) were important because they produce large litters, are omnivorous (therefore easier to feed than animals with more specialised diets), and because virtually all of the pig can be eaten. It was customary to slaughter all but the breeding stock at the end of the summer and to preserve the meat by salting in order to provide a valuable supply of fat and protein during the winter (Rackham 1986, 75).

Pigs were also important during the Anglo-Saxon and Early Norman periods because pasture rights, including rights of pannage, were often contingent on the lord of the estate receiving either one swine a year or one swine in ten in payment. For those smallholders living near the wooded areas of the Weald and the Blean who were
oblighd to supply the lord of the estate with services or in kind, this almost certainly meant swine (Stenton 1975, 473-4). However, on the coastal levels north of the Blean, kind was more likely to be salt.

The later Anglo-Saxon and early medieval remains at Chestfield occurred principally in the form of the sub-rectilinear enclosures described above as exposed in Areas 1 and 2, approximately 150m east of Chestfield Manor House. Precedents for other such Anglo-Saxon enclosures occur at Pennyland, Bucks. (Williams 1993, 48-55); Poundbury, Dorset (Sparey-Green 1997, 127-152); Whitehouse Industrial Estate, Suffolk (Medieval Archaeology 1996, 284) and Riby Cross Roads, Lincolnshire (Steedman 1994, 221). Unpublished work on other Anglo-Saxon animal enclosures has also taken place in Kent at Market Way in Canterbury (Rady forthcoming) and near Wainscott (Rady and Sparey-Green, forthcoming).

The Late Anglo-Saxon pottery occurred mostly in the Area 2 gullies, situated closer to the postulated dwellings to the south, on the other side of the Radfall Road drove way. Larger quantities of pottery dated c.1050-c.1150 in the Area 2 gullies appear to indicate an increase in the settlement’s population around the time of the Norman invasion. The later gullies in Area 1 suggest that, as the population continued to increase, additional animal enclosures were built to the east. The very large quantities of pottery dating to the early medieval period (c.1075-c.1250), along with other domestic rubbish in the south-east part of Area 1, suggest that, by the thirteenth century, a substantial settlement had developed and that the centre of settlement had shifted eastward. The large numbers of oyster, mussel and whelk shells within this domestic rubbish indicate the continued reliance on a coastal food resource which has been exploited in the area since the Mesolithic, and probably before. Clearly, during the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods, shellfish, along with wet fish, provided a reliable and valuable dietary supplement.

The ceramic evidence from the site suggests two periods of intense activity, one associated with the use of the enclosures and Radfall Road dated broadly from c.850-c.1150, the other, dated to c.1200-c.1275/1300, associated with the abandonment of the enclosures, the falling out of use of the northern termination of Radfall Road and a great increase in settlement activity to the south, as indicated by the use of the adjacent part of Radfall Road for large-scale rubbish dumping. This period also saw the construction of the hut in Area 4.

A total of 548 potsherds dating to the second phase of settlement activity (c.1200-c.1275/1300) were recovered from the remains of the isolated sunken-floored hut situated in Area 4. The associated presence of the internal hearth, along with the adjacent midden of oyster, mussel, cockle and whelk shells and potsherds, also dated
c.1200-c.1275/1300, indicate that the remains were of a small, thirteenth-century domestic dwelling, probably a cott or hovel. Again, a diet rich in shellfish is indicated, with the large quantities of shells associated with the hut suggesting shellfish were a staple part of the diet. Apart from its importance as a local food resource, shellfish, along with wet fish, were of great importance to the local economy in terms of trade, as is indicated by the various and constant disputes over their sale and over fishing rights which took place during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see Goodsall 1938, 222-244).

Many sunken-floored hut-like structures of the type described above are known from the Early to Mid Anglo-Saxon period, for example at Mucking in Essex (Jones and Jones 1974, 31-9) and at Salmonby in Lincolnshire (Evison 1973, 161-72), but the discovery of such a structure dating to the thirteenth century is something of a curiosity. The interpretation of such structures, the Anglo-Saxon variants of which are known as ‘hut hollows’ or ‘grub huts’ (from the German ‘Grubenhäuser’) has been controversial, as they often appear too small to have been dwellings (Brown 1978, 30-8). However, in recent years, artefactual and cultural evidence in the form of fish bones, beads, potsherds and iron fittings recovered from primary deposits within such structures (see for example, Parfitt et al. 1996, 28-31) suggest that they were built and used as dwellings, although many were clearly used as rubbish pits following their eventual abandonment. This is consistent with the views of Leeds, the antiquarian, who first undertook detailed investigation of these structures, and who proposed a major reinterpretation of Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns based on archaeological rather than documentary evidence (Leeds 1968, 1-19).

Although of thirteenth-century date, the hut in Area 4 can be assumed to have been a habitation of ‘grub-hut’ type on the basis of its sunken floor, its associated hearth and midden and the large amounts of potsherds found within it. Its small size and apparently isolated position suggest it was of low-status, perhaps the dwelling of a serf or villein and perhaps only temporarily occupied. In either event, an extremely rudimentary standard of living is indicated.

The Area 4 hut suggests that, on the isolated coastal levels north of the Blean, a very rudimentary standard of living prevailed into the medieval period for those at the lower end of the social spectrum, although it should be stressed that there is no demonstrable typological link between this structure and those of the Early/Mid Anglo-Saxon period.
The pottery (John Cotter)

Virtually all the pottery from the site is of local manufacture, mostly at the Tyler Hill kilns only three miles away. Smaller amounts of early medieval sandy ware (c. 1075-c. 1250) may have been produced closer to Chestfield at undiscovered workshops, perhaps located in the northern part of the Blean Woods or on the coastal plain to the north. In addition, some shelly wares of the same date may have been manufactured at a similarly unlocated workshops on the north-east coast of Kent. A few thirteenth-century vessels appear to be from north-west Kent. Two glazed fine ware jugs come from London, this representing the most distant source to have supplied the site during the medieval period. The London and North-West Kent wares may have been traded coastally and acquired at local markets, such as Reculver or at Chestfield itself. The complete lack of imported Continental pottery from the site (easily available at nearby Canterbury), or anything more luxurious than a couple of London ware jugs, points to a degree of poverty and rural isolation.

From a ceramics research viewpoint, the Chestfield assemblage provides a useful contrast to early medieval pottery assemblages from Canterbury, most significantly in providing evidence for a minor pottery industry or workshop similar to, but distinct from, that at Tyler Hill, and possibly supplying only rural areas between the Blean Woods and the coast. As yet, however, this sub-industry is only poorly understood. A full account of the pottery is included in the client report on Churchwood Drive (Allen and Cotter 2000).

CONCLUSION

The remains of the group of Anglo-Saxon and early medieval animal enclosures at Chestfield were almost certainly connected to Radfall Road and probably led to the swine pastures of the Blean, giving a valuable insight into the economy of this then remote and impoverished part of Kent. In addition, the practice, during the Anglo-Saxon period, of salting pig meat following the seasonal autumn slaughter points to an important economic link between the swineherds of the coastal levels and the North Kent salt industry and also suggests that drove ways doubled as salt ways, and were probably also used to transport seafood and wet fish to inland markets.

The nature of the first Anglo-Saxon settlement can only be guessed at but the presence of pottery dated to AD 450-650 points to activity on the site during the Early Anglo-Saxon period, on what appears to have originally been part of a royal estate but, in the period before the
Norman invasion, was an unnamed ‘yoke’ divided into four small holdings.

Evidence for the poverty and backwardness of the Anglo-Saxon and early medieval settlement at Chestfield is provided by the presence of a small ‘grub hut’-like dwelling of thirteenth-century date but of a type more usually associated with the earlier Anglo-Saxon period. The humble character of the pottery recovered from this and the other settlement remains was also indicative of poverty, while the general lack of higher-quality imported wares underlined the settlement’s remoteness. The evidence also suggests that the practice of pannage continued on the Blean and the settlements to the north for considerably longer than elsewhere, perhaps up to the twelfth century, in an area where poor agricultural land, isolation and a small and scattered population acted as obstacles to cultural and economic development. It is against this background that the continued importance of salt and seafood (including fish) to the area’s economy may be seen, both in terms of local consumption and to supply the markets of Canterbury.

The use of Radfall Road, along with the Radfall, to delineate the boundaries of estates, parishes and ecclesiastic woodland holdings is perhaps the most compelling evidence for their antiquity, given that the first parish boundaries are thought to have been established in the eighth century (Loy 1984, 58-60), and that property boundaries tend to remain fixed over long periods of time. On the basis of the latter observation it may also be proposed that Radfall Road represents the pre-Augustine boundary of the royal estate of Sturry and that an Early Anglo-Saxon or older origin is therefore probable. However, as is argued above, the subsequent role of both Radfall Road and the Radfall in the administrative division of land contrasts with their probable original use as the means by which the products of this impoverished area were transported. Indeed, it may be no exaggeration to state that the economy of the small rural settlements north of the Blean was based almost entirely on swine, salt and seafood.

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133
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