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INVESTIGATIONS AND EXCAVATIONS DURING  
THE YEAR

Dartford District Archaeological Group. Mr C. Baker reports:

The Group has continued to carry out small-scale exploratory excavations in Dartford Borough as well as some rescue work on selected sites.

In 1988, a fairly large-scale excavation, involving the use of a JCB, was carried out on the site of Manor Farm at Swanscombe. The building which it was believed dated back to medieval times was demolished in early 1960s. On the site were built Council offices, which were opened in 1964. The Group's work concentrated on the grounds to the rear of the offices in an effort of relocating the foundations of its medieval predecessor. Most of the building remains found, including a large cellar, were of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century in date. However, evidence of a corner of a flint building was found as well as a set of steps leading to another cellar. Neither of these features frustratingly could be uncovered further as they disappeared under the still upstanding modern offices. These offices have now been demolished and evaluation work on the site was carried out by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust in 1992. The site has now been developed for housing.

Small-scale excavations were also carried out ahead of development on the Mason's Arms site, Spital Street, Dartford. In arrangement with the developers as well as the County Archaeologist, two areas were examined. Medieval and Roman deposits were found, but no associated features.

Across the Street at the rear of Cobden House, a small exploratory excavation revealed a large quantity of fairly sizeable sherds of Roman pottery. The adjacent site (east side) was later the subject of an evaluation excavation by C.A.T. in 1991.

At the end of 1991 the Group obtained permission to carry out trial trenching on a large open building site to the east of the remains of Henry VIII's Dartford Manor House. The machine-dug trenches revealed a demolition layer of post-Tudor date within which were found fragments of medieval stamped floor-tiles, which possibly came from Dartford Priory. The Priory was demolished to make way for the building of Henry's Manor House in 1541-44. Some worked stone and shaped bricks were also found during our work, but no further foundations were uncovered with the exception of part of the east boundary wall near Hythe Street.

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Other sites worked on by the Group included land to the rear of Broomfields in Dartford's High Street, which revealed medieval and Roman material, but no features. An attempt was made to relocate a supposed Anglo-Saxon cemetery off Darenth Road, but no evidence came to light with the exception of one or two sherds of possible Roman date and a brooch of Colchester 'B' type.

At the time of writing the Group is involved in an exploratory excavation at Lower Hythe Street, Dartford, in which we have reached medieval deposits. A small number of our members are assisting the owner of an eighteenth/nineteenth-century ice well at Hawley Manor, near Dartford, to empty out accumulated rubbish prior to its restoration.

Further work is planned in Dartford close to the Westgate of Henry VIII's Manor House as well as land close to Watling Street, Dartford, formerly used as allotments but now due for development. The allotment holders have been allocated space on a new site in Gore Road, Darenth.

Prior to the field being laid out for allotments, Dartford Borough Council kindly allowed the Group access to the site. Unfortunately, no early finds or features were uncovered in our trial trenching.

Finally, Group members are working on a follow-up to the popular 'Rediscovering Dartford' book which we produced in 1986 and is now long out of print. The new publication is due out in 1993 to mark the Group's 21st birthday.