

Understanding Ospringe

Report for Keyhole 57 19 Water Lane, Ospringe, Faversham.

Grid Reference TR 00308 60794

1. Introduction

19 Water Lane is one of a terrace of six small Victorian cottages built between 1860 and 1880.¹ Until 1961 when the West Brook was finally culverted, they faced directly onto the course of the stream as it flowed down Water Lane.



Fig 1: Water Lane looking north², with the mill (weather board building) on the right. The bridge crosses the exit stream from the mill pond. The red arrow shows the position of 19, Water Lane.

Prior to the building of these properties, the land is shown on the 1865 map as part of a communal garden shared between the Maison Dieu and neighbouring properties (see **Fig 2a**). The flint wall that forms the western boundary of the terrace's gardens is thought to be older than the terrace itself and date back at least to the communal garden stage and possibly earlier.³

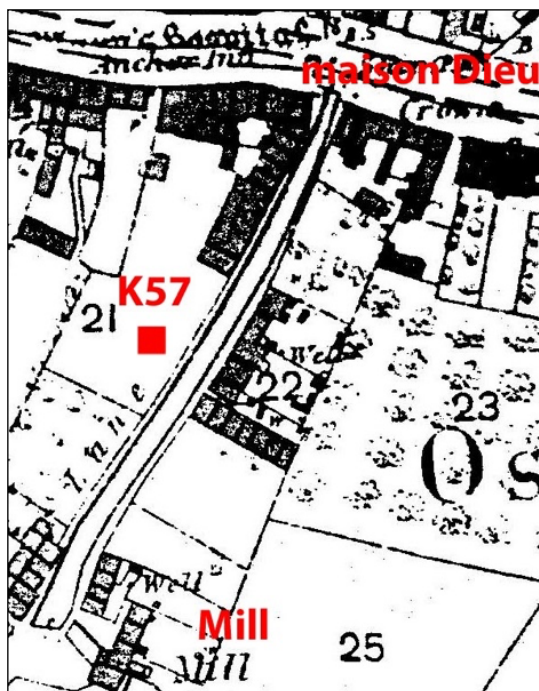
¹ Swale Borough Council c 1990 *Townscape Survey: Ospringe Village*

² Photograph from the archive of the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, Faversham, Kent

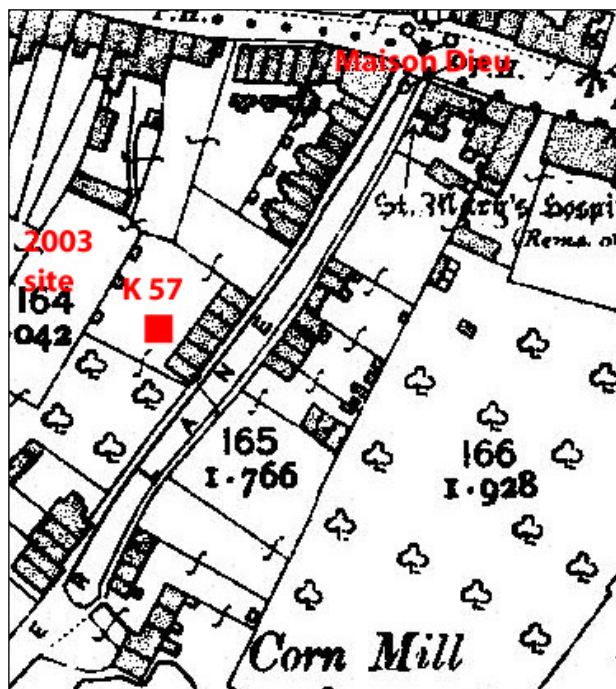
³ Lesley Dines pers. comm..

Fig 2: Location of Keyhole 57.

a) 1865⁴



b) 1907⁵



2. Location of pit

The main reason for investigating this plot was to test the theory that in the medieval period, the whole of Water Lane was lined with properties.⁶ At present (2008) there are no known medieval properties in Water Lane apart from Queen Court at the far south end, although some, e.g. Bridge Cottage and Orchard House, may be somewhat earlier than their official 17th century dating.⁷ The keyhole location was therefore as close to the actual house and Water Lane as practicable. The exact location was measured with reference to the property.

3. The procedures

A one metre square was pegged out using the planning square and the area delineated marked with string. The position of the square was recorded by measuring to mapped corners of the house. Turf was removed carefully from the square, rolled and set aside in plastic bags. The pit was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which was fully recorded. The excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap scanned using a metal detector. Finds were set aside for each context and special finds were given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Any features revealed were carefully recorded. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the turf replaced.

4. The findings

At a depth of 14cm a large modern builder's rubble dump was revealed in the south east corner, the first sign being a plastic sheet covering the rubble [03] [04]. Investigation swiftly showed the instability of this deposit and the fact that it extended south eastwards into the side of the excavation. In the interests of

⁴ OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2500

⁵ OS 1906 Kent Sheet 34.09 Scale: 1:2500

⁶ A Percival, M Frohnsdorff pers. comm.

⁷ Townscape Survey, op. cit.

safety, only the western half of the pit was excavated from this point, with the proviso that the keyhole would be extended 0.5m to the west if its contents justified this. This did not happen.

To begin with, the deposits were much-worked garden soils [02] [05] containing small fragments of 19th century pottery, clay pipe, animal bone and building material.



Fig 3: The chalk layer [06] can be seen in the wall of K5, marked by a white tab. The surface exposed across the floor of the pit is context [08], full of large flints. The unsafe builder's dump area can be seen on the left, covered up.

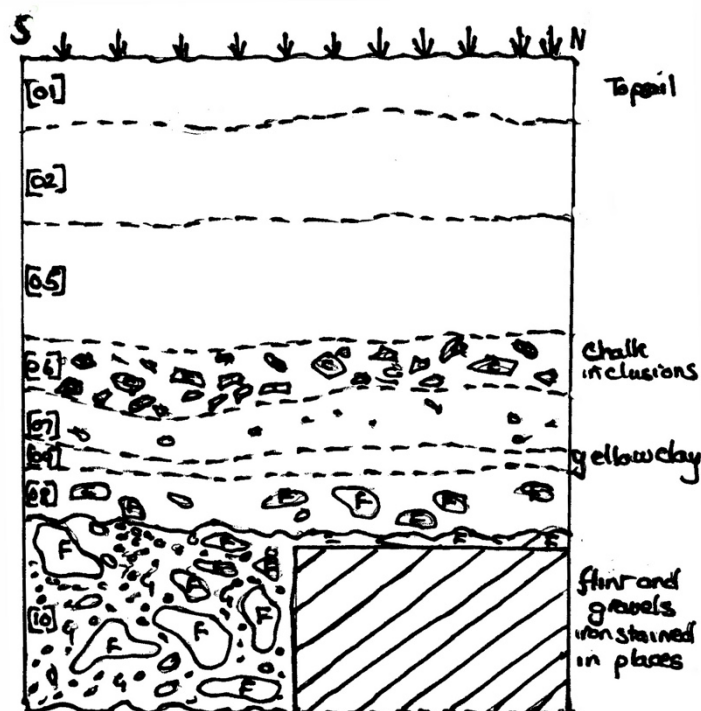
At around 60cm, however, a layer with a high percentage of chalk fragments was encountered [06], with the sub angular character of the fragments suggesting a broken up chalk path or surface. Below this was a dark loamy soil with many flint and chalk inclusions [07] and a tiny amount of post medieval pottery. Then beneath a thin layer of yellow clay [09] large flints were encountered, with one small piece of Tyler Hill medieval pottery being found [08].

The flints quickly became a solid mass with gravel and rounded pebbles in the gaps and no signs of human activity [10]. A quadrant of this deposit was excavated, with considerable difficulty, to a depth of 40cm. **Fig 4** summarises these relationships.

Fig 4: Sketch section of west face of K57.

F = flint
C = chalk
G = gravel

Width of pit = 1m
Maximum depth of pit = 1.2m



This was not an easy keyhole to dig contextually. Boundaries between contexts were matters of gradation rather than sharp change, with the exception of the builder's rubble pit at the top and the solid flint layer [10] at the bottom of the pit.

5. Interpretation

The underlying flint layer, first encountered at a depth of around 85cm, was almost certainly a former bed of the West Brook. The early habits of this much managed stream (with mills, ponds and canalised sections recorded in historical times) are at present unknown, but commercial excavation in a plot west of the flint wall in 2003 revealed a great depth of natural stream deposits from between 0.8m and 1.4m downwards.⁸ Between the flint/gravel deposit [10] and the chalky layer [06] in K57 only post medieval material was found, suggesting that [06] is associated with the surface of the former communal garden. Above [06] was relatively modern material, suggesting garden make up and worked soil after the building of the terrace of properties around 1870. The builders' rubble was recent, although well covered up with top soil.

In short, apart from one tiny 'midden scatter' sherd of medieval pottery, no evidence was found for medieval activity at this site. It is worth remembering that in parts of Faversham that were active in medieval period, abundant medieval pottery and other medieval finds have always been found in equally small pits.⁹

6. Final comments

Although not 'exciting' in terms of glamorous finds, this keyhole did provide useful evidence for investigating the past development of Water Lane. This report should be seen in conjunction with those for Keyholes 50, 52, 53 and 55 which were all dug to test the same theory about Water Lane's medieval past.¹⁰

7. Acknowledgments

Great thanks to Lesley Dines who allowed us to dig in her garden and also pointed out the importance of the flint wall.

Pat Reid

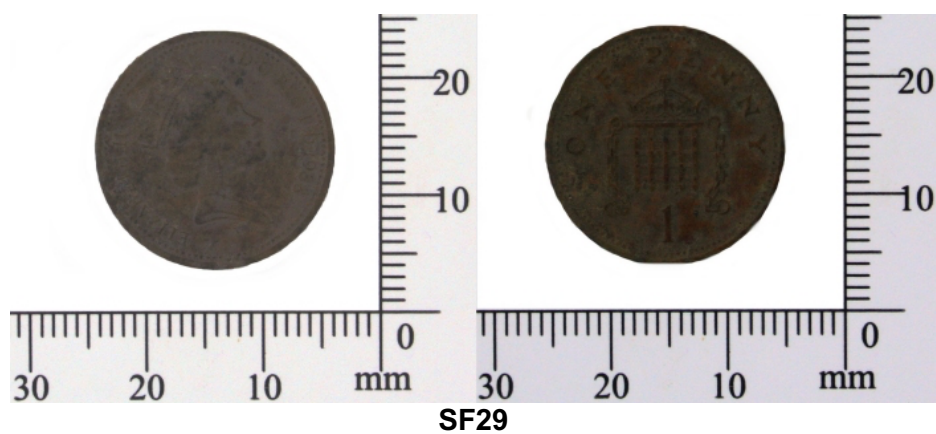
November 2008

⁸ A Ward 2003 An Archaeological Evaluation on land to the rear of The Anchor, Ospringe. Canterbury Archaeological Trust

⁹ [www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/Hunt the Saxons](http://www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/Hunt%20the%20Saxons)

¹⁰ [www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/ Understanding Ospringe](http://www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/Understanding%20Ospringe)

Small Finds



Small Finds Details

SF29: One penny coin, Elizabeth II dated 1988 (only retained for spot dating).