F·S·A·R·G
The Faversham Society
Archaeological Research Group

Community Archaeology

Investigating the Stonebridge Crossing SBC15

Report for Excavation K132 at Twymans Mill, West St, Faversham

Grid Reference: TR 01140 61498

Twymans Mill from the bottom of Dark Hill, across the Ponds, c 1900

1. Introduction

FSARG's first two years, 2005-6, were spent working in the Tanners Street and Lower West Street area, hunting the Saxons.[1] After several years investigating topics in Abbey Street and then in Ospringe, we returned to the other side of the valley, looking in detail at the Davington Plateau in 2010[2], 2011[3] and 2012[4] (Brent Hill). These investigations have yielded abundant archaeological finds, from Mesolithic tools to a medieval manor to Roman and Saxon pottery.

In 2015, after a sojourn in Preston next Faversham[5], we returned for a single two-week season to try and fill the gap between the findings on the Davington Plateau and those in Tanners and Lower West Street. It seemed to us that the Stonebridge Crossing of the Westbrook has been a focus for human settlement and movement for a very long time indeed - we have evidence from the area going back 14,000 years. This season was an attempt to increase our understanding of the area immediately adjacent to the crossing.

The offer of opportunity to dig in the grounds of Twymans Mill was welcomed because it gave us a good opportunity to get as close as possible to the Westbrook at the Stonebridge Crossing point. Admittedly we had access to the open area on the other side of the road from Twymans, but we predicted that there would be a major house demolition and foundations deposit over there[6] so the Twymans side seemed more likely to yield early archaeology results without battering through masses of building material.

2. Geographical and historical background

a) Geography

The study area lies between 2m and 1m above the stream level. The stream itself was running at a *surface* height of 3.33m OD.[7] Converting tidal values from Chart Datum, this gives a difference in water surface height of 2.1m for an average Creek high tide and 6.1m at low tide.[8] These differences may seem absurdly large given how close this point is to the head of the tide on the Creek. The difference is because the stream is artificially held back just downstream by dams and sluices to create potential energy and the head of the tide has become an artificial point around 150m away. The dams were built to create the millponds for gunpowder manufacture and earlier milling activities in medieval times. Even though the Westbrook has lost its main headwater streams down from Ospringe[9], it has a surprisingly constant flow, with the main input seeming to be from a spring in the Chart Mills area. More detail on the control of the stream can be found in the FSARG paper on the non-invasive survey in the St Ann's area[10] and is a striking feature in the Map Sequence shown in **Fig 2**.

[1] FSARG website www.community-archaeology.org.uk / Hunt the Saxons HSX05 & HSX06
[2] FSARG website op.cit. Davington Mysteries DVN10
[3] FSARG website op.cit. Davington Mysteries DVN11
[4] FSARG website op.cit. Davington Mysteries DVN12
[5] FSARG website op.cit A most peculiar parish PSN13, PSN14, PSN15
[6] FSARG website www.community-archaeology.org.uk/ SBC15/ Report on KP129 and surveys
[7] measured by FSARG in July 2015 - see Appendix 7
[8] see FSARG website op.cit. *Paper on the Upper Basin* for explanations of Chart Datum etc
[9] FSARG website op.cit. Understanding Ospringe: *Final summary*
[10] FSARG website op.cit. *St Ann's Area 2012*

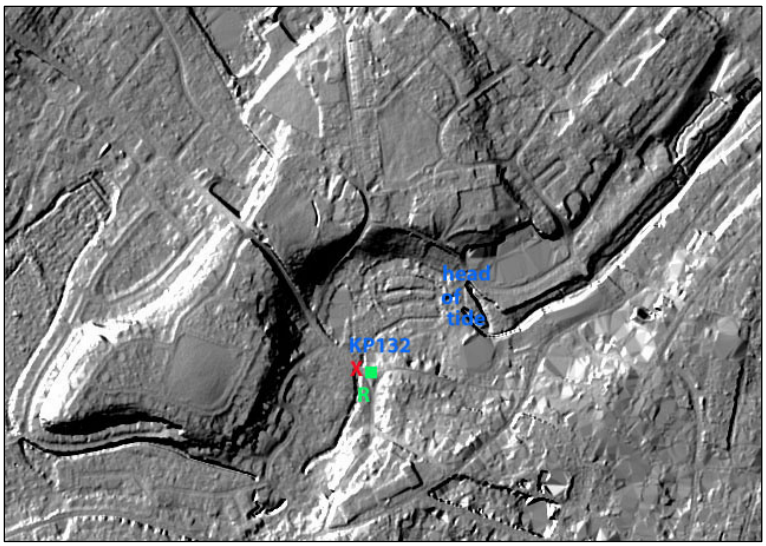


Fig 1: LIDAR[11] map of the Lower Westbrook valley. K132 is marked in also the geo resistivity surveyed area R opposite. The Crossing itself is marked **X**.

LIDAR is new kind of aerial mapping using laser. It gives a very useful map where the hills and valleys really stand out through their cloak of trees and buildings.

b) Geology

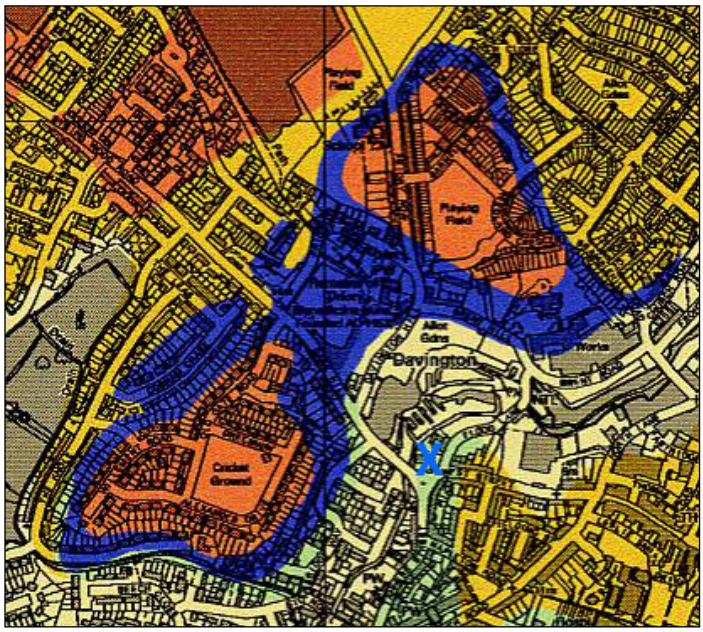
The Westbrook valley sides are uplands of Upper Chalk. To the west, the Davington Plateau, the Upper Chalk is overlain by Thanet Sands. On both sides the Upper Chalk is finally topped with Head Gravels and Brickearth, recent drift deposits from the Quaternary (Glacial) period.

Fig 2: Geology map of the Lower Westbrook area.

Key:

Orange:	*Head Gravels*
Bright yellow:	*Head Brickearth*
Blue:	*Thanet Sands*
Light Green:	*Upper Chalk*
Cream:	*Alluvium*

X marks Twymans Mill, on the alluvium but close to Upper Chalk.



At the beginning of the early post glacial Holocene period, around 9,500 BC (11,500 years ago), sea level was far lower than it is nowadays, about 150m (more than 300 feet) below present levels. At this time the prehistoric Westbrook must been very powerful, cutting its way down in melt periods towards that lower sea level and carving a much deeper valley than we see nowadays. As sea level rose, at first very abruptly then much more gradually and the land subsided, the Westbrook calmed down and the valley silted up considerably.[12] Therefore although we have plenty of evidence for Mesolithic settlement from up on the Plateau we are unlikely to see what was happening by the Mesolithic Westbrook - that is buried deep under the alluvium and well under modern sea level.

As can be seen from the geology map **Fig 2**, Twymans Mill is built on this alluvium, deposited in the post glacial period.

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[11] LIDAR

[12] Gaffney V, S Fitch and D Smith 2009 *Europe's Lost World: the rediscovery of Doggerland*. Research Report No 160 CBA : York pp 106-128 in particular, the whole report is useful.

c) Known historical background

From the map sequence overleaf, it can be seen that the Wool Warehouse, as Twymans used to be called, is not shown before the 1865 map, although No. 64 West Street next door was present throughout the period covered by the maps. In fact, no buildings are known for this site before the Wool Warehouse was built in 1806. Wool has been a major export of Faversham during the medieval and post medieval periods - indeed, Wilkinson claims that in 1716, Faversham was the most important wool exporting port in the country.[13]

Although used as a warehouse from the start, this was also a fellmongers and tannery during the 19th century. The tanning troughs can be seen on the north side of the mill in the 1865 and 1907 maps in **Fig 4**. During the 19th century, the warehouse was hemmed in to the south by a narrow street lined with houses and pubs. To the north was an open area with access to Stonebridge ponds. (The Forge north of the warehouse and described by English Heritage as part of the warehouse complex, is not shown on the 1865 or1907 maps, therefore its dating as 18th century in its listing[14] must surely be incorrect).

In the 20th century the warehouse came into the ownership of G Twymans & Co Ltd. Twymans was an energetic local firm with a large shop in Canterbury selling clothes, and many interests in agricultural supplies for East Kent.

Fig 3: Twymans shop in Canterbury in 1922.[15]

In 1991, the Warehouse was converted into 16 flats, with the grounds paved and a charming patio built on the north side next to the stream. In December 2013, a surge on top of the high tide did case some flooding on the ground floor, as indeed it did all along Faversham Creek.

[13] Wilkinson P 2006 The historical Development of the Port of Faversham 158--1780 BAR British Series 413
[14] KCC HER EH Building ID 438909 Listing NGR TR0116461519
[15] Website 'Historic Canterbury' , www.machado.com/St Georges Place

Fig 4: A chronological sequence of maps of the Stonebridge Crossing area.

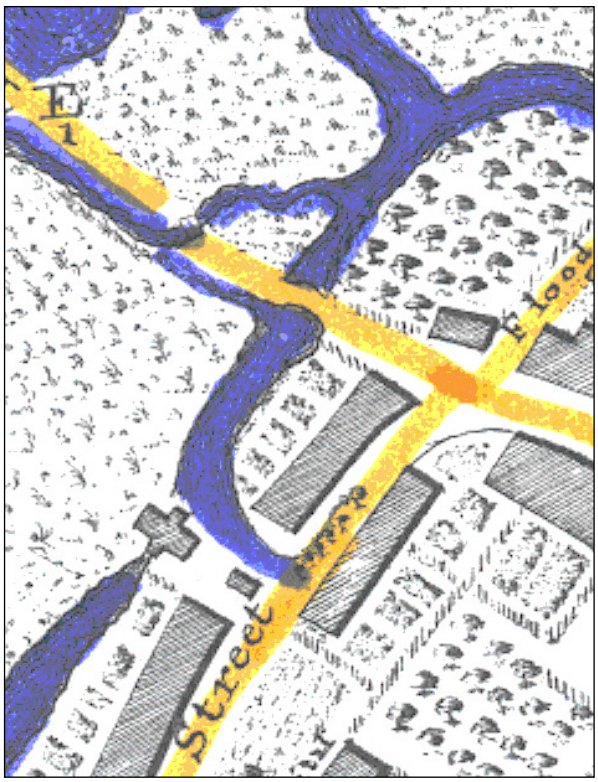


Fig 4a:

Fig 4b:

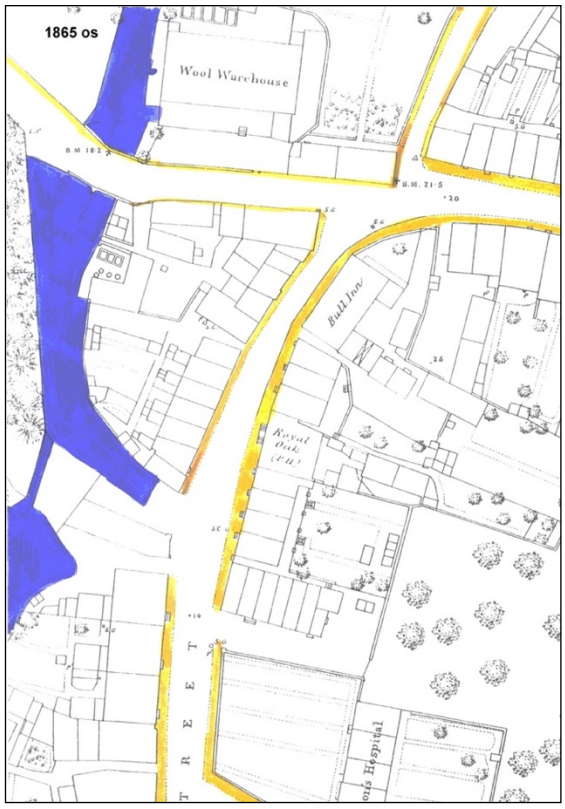


Fig 4c:

Fig 4a, the 1774 map of Edward Jacobs.[16] **Fig 4b** is the Stonebridge Crossing part of the 1781 gunpowder works map.[17] Notice that the second map is not as up to date as the Jacobs one and shows the Westbrook as unbridged: the bridge was built in 1773. Otherwise the patterns are very similar, with the inlet south of the Crossing and the Kings Mill works showing clearly just south of the inlet.

The wonderfully detailed 1865[18] map shown in **Fig 4c** gives important details about the uses of the triangle of land next to the crossing**.** It also shows the Wool Warehouse that was built directly beside the bridge in 1806. This is the structure known nowadays as Twymans Mill.

Tannery and fellmongers pits can be seen immediately to the south of the bridge and to the north of the Wool Warehouse.

[16] Jacobs, E. 1774 Map of Faversham from History of Faversham repub. 1974 by the Faversham Society
[17] Map for Royal Gunpowder Works, 1781
[18] OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1: 500

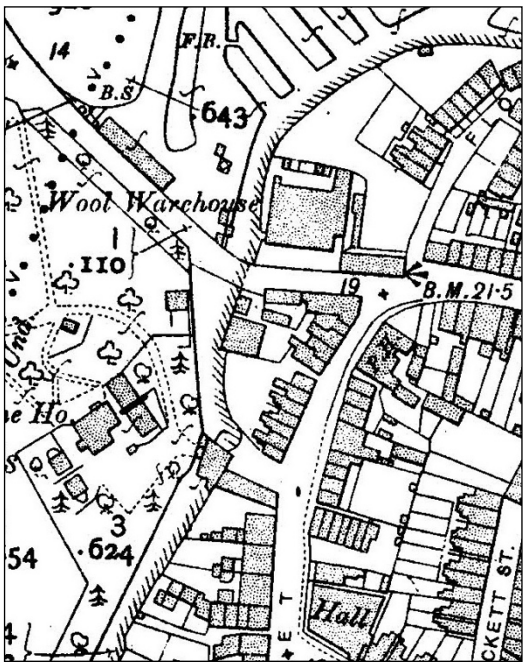


Fig 4d:

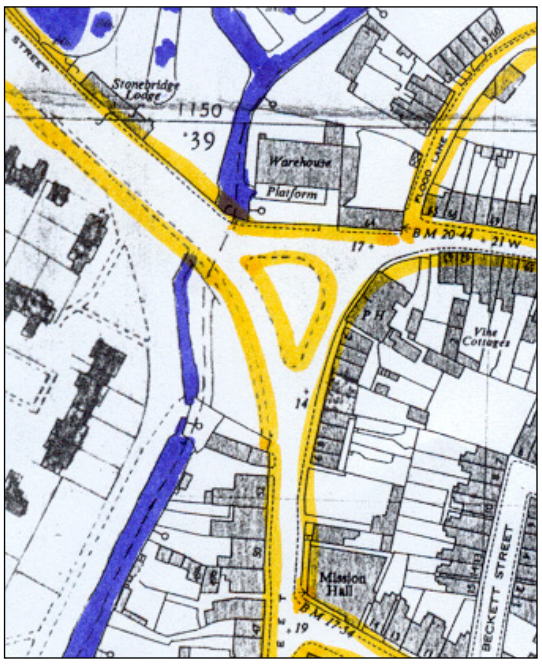


Fig 4e:

Fig 4d, the Crossing area in 1907,[19]
Fig 4e in 1970.[20]

Between 1865 and 1907, there were not many changes. Between1907 and 1970, however, drastic change has taken place in the central part of the area. The triangle of houses and industry has been swept away, to widen the corner of the road. The inlet has disappeared. On the left bank of the Westbrook can be seen the houses of the new Stonebridge estate.

The 2004[21] map in **Fig 4f** confirms these changes.

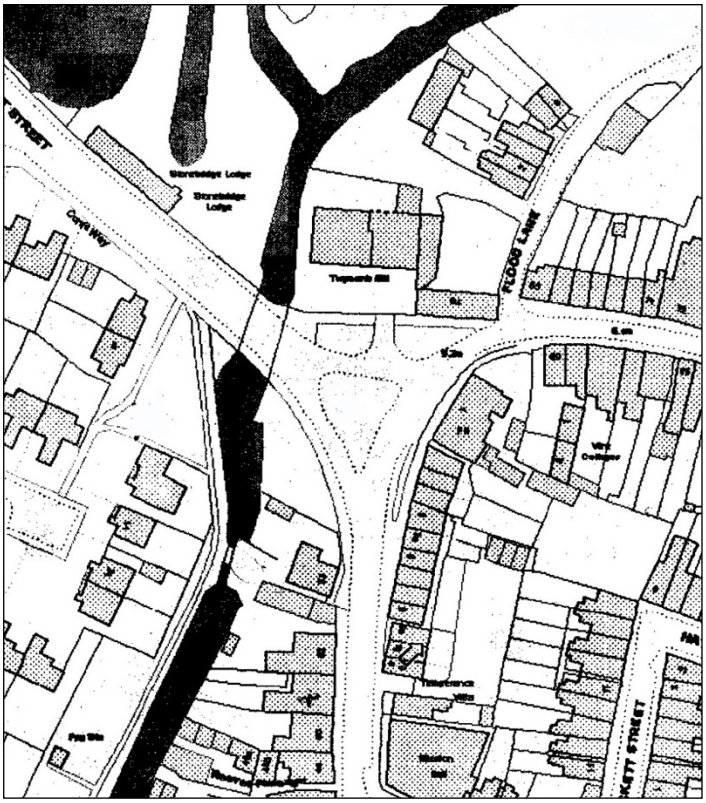


Fig 4f:

[19] OS 1907 Kent Sheet XXXIV.9 1:2500
[20] OS 1970 Kent Sheet XXXIV.9 1:2500
[21] OS 2004 Kent Sheet XXXIV.9 1:2500

3. Location of pit

Sadly, nearly all of the land around the Mill was paved or gravelled, with concrete underneath. The area behind the Mill and close to the stream had been turned into a pretty patio area and it was to the side of this, nearest to the Mill and the Westbrook, that a small 1m square was possible. This location is shown on the map in **Fig 5**, along with the geo resistivity surveyed open area opposite. We would have liked to see if the fellmongers troughs shown on the 1865 and 1907 maps had survived, but that was not to be.

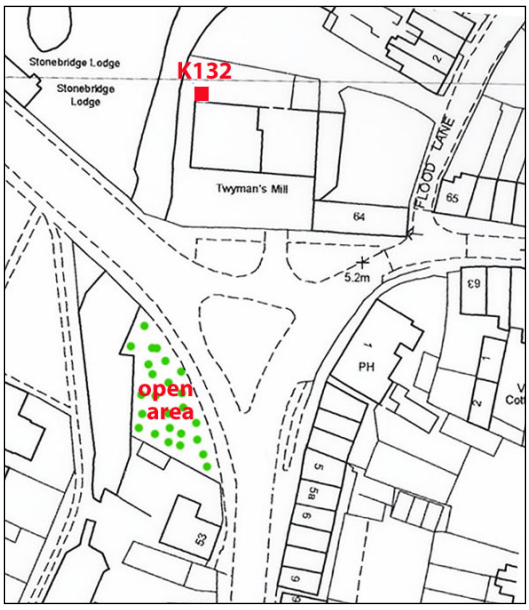


Fig 5: The location of K132.[22]

4. The procedures

A 1m 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. The pit was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which was fully recorded. The keyhole was excavated only to a maximum depth of 0.6m, because of waterlogging. All 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.

5. The findings

Fig 6: Early stage of excavation. The Mill building wall is just visible on the left. The bushes are on the far side of the Westbrook.

Beneath the gravel layer [1] were a series of shallow layers, [2] to [5] more or less horizontal. All were poorly sorted, a jumble of brick, tile, ironwork. pottery and glass fragments. The matrix of the layers varied somewhat, some lighter, some more compact. When the surface of context [6] was cleared, around 40cm down, a pit was identified in the middle of the excavated area, [7] cut, [8] fill. An attempt was made to remove [8] but this was only partly possible due to waterlogging and extreme mudification of the soil.

[22] National Map Centre 2009 Ser. No. 00600700 Centroid ref: 600945 161604

Fig 7: KP132 at the end of excavation. The possible earlier post medieval surface [6] is visible and the pit edge [7] and fill [8] clearly different from [6] in composition.

Fig 8: Sieving the wet, sticky content of [8], a finger-breaking task.

6. Interpretation

Context [6] was clearly an earlier surface, perhaps in the pre conversion days or even in the pre-Wool Warehouse days, with the rubbish pit [7] / [8] dug into it at a later date. The brick and tile material in all of the contexts except [6] was all of around late 18th / early 19th century date, which would fit with the original building (1806). The brick included dark red brick and also yellow pre-Stock brick, which were used mainly for ornamental purposes. The tiles included some well-made pantile pieces, somewhat unexpected for an industrial building, unless this was a prestigious one.

The pottery content of the various contexts was perhaps significant. Although all contexts had a similar proportion of post medieval (mostly stoneware) and 19th century pottery, the only ones with earlier medieval pottery were the two topmost ones, [2] and [3]. An explanation for this could be that in the excavation of the pit [7] into the earlier surface [6] the earliest material would of course be 'upchucked' last and be on top. This is the classic way of getting what archaeologists called 'residual finds' where old and much newer artefacts are found together: every time some one digs a hole, the oldest-at-the-bottom rule is literally turned upside down on the spoil heap.

7. Final comments

This was a very tantalising pit. It hinted at the possibility of uncovering an earlier river bank, maybe one in use before the building of the actual bridge (1773). But the limitations of the accessibility of diggable

ground and the seepage of ground water at only 60cm down meant that only the smallest glimpse could be gained.

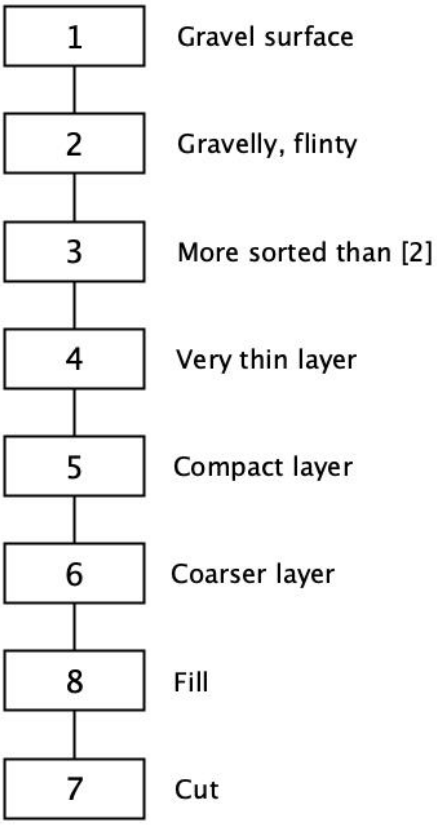
8. Acknowledgments

The team was very well looked after at the site. Great thanks to Moyra Harding and Teresa Heselden for their interest, support and hospitality, we envy them that patio area by the running stream and the lovely flats created by the imaginative conversion.

Dr Pat Reid
November 2015

Twymans Mill in 2015, from the Bridge.

Appendix 1:
Harris matrix for KP132



Appendix 2:
Small finds from KP132

Context No.	Small Finds No.	Simple Name	Material	Count	Weight	Written Description	Dimensions	Date	
								Earliest	Latest
5	6	Cames (coloured window glass framing)	Lead	1	4.85g	Strip of thin lead folded to form a slot for the insertion of glass. This was standard in medieval times and went out of use in the post medieval period. Locally, however, Willement (lived nearby) revived the use of this method in stained glass windows. Ref: Wikipedia articles on 'Lead cams and Coper' and 'Willement and Stained Glass'.	L 67.2mm H 5.8mm thick 3.6mm (faded)	1200 or 1850	1500 or 1880
4	5	Buckle	Iron	1	27.4g	A rectangular buckle with a lower plate. The tongue is missing and the buckle is heavily corroded so that decoration cannot be seen but there appears to be rounded projections at the corners. This could be a horse equipment buckle.	L 38mm W 28mm D 11mm	1800	1900
8	33	Tile?	Clay	1	6.54g	Orange / red with a well shaped " corner " which suggests it to be a piece of tile.	30.7mm x 24.6mm x 9.6mm	?	?

Appendix 3:
Flint tools from KP132

Catalogue No.	Context	Type	Period
865	3	scraper	LBA / EIA
866	8	side scraper / knife	EN