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The Faversham Society
Archaeological Research Group



Community
Archaeology

Understanding Ospringe

Report for Keyhole 43 22 Ospringe St, Ospringe, Faversham.

Grid Reference TR 00328 60896

1. Introduction

Numbers 21 and 22 Ospringe St and the shop premises of A.J. Barkaway (butchers) with adjacent car park, stable, small paddock and gardens, occupy a corner plot at the junction of Grove Place and the Street. The cottages were constructed around 1650 of red brick with roofs clad in Kent peg tiles and with wooden casement windows: they form one of the earliest surviving buildings in the village. The shop, constructed around 1811, is brick built with ceramic tile cladding and a Kent peg tile roof. The two barns / storehouses were constructed around 1850 and the stables are a recent build.¹

The whole plot occupies a previously uninvestigated part of the site of the medieval (built c 1234) Hospital of St Mary of Ospringe, nowadays known as the Maison Dieu. Other parts of the site were excavated in 1977², 1990³ and 2007⁴. St Marys was mostly demolished after the reformation, with only two buildings surviving, both on the south side of the Street. An inventory of 1571 gives a useful snapshot of this plot at that particular time.⁵

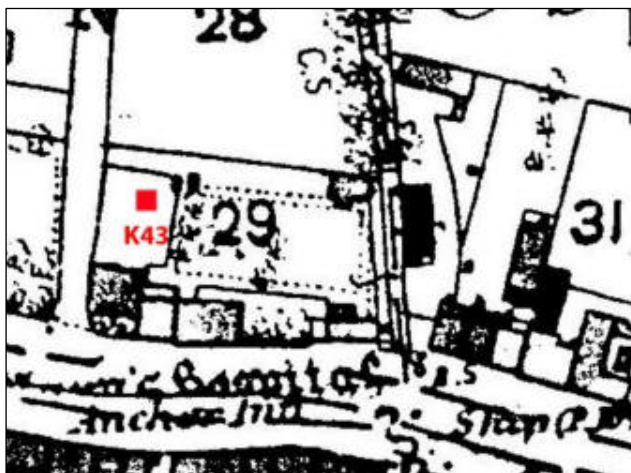


Fig 1a: Location of K43 in 1865.⁶

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

² Smith G.H 1980 'The Excavation of the Hospital of St Mary, Ospringe commonly called Maison Dieu' *Arch. Cant.* XCV pp 81-184

³ Parfitt, K 1990 'Archaeological excavation and Recording at Nos 14-18 the Street, Ospringe'. *Kent Minor Sites series No 2*. KARU

⁴ Margetts, Andrew 2008 Archaeological Investigations at Fairways, Ospringe. Archaeology South East: unpublished site report.

⁵ Survey of Kentish Estates 1571 Archives of St Johns College, Cambridge

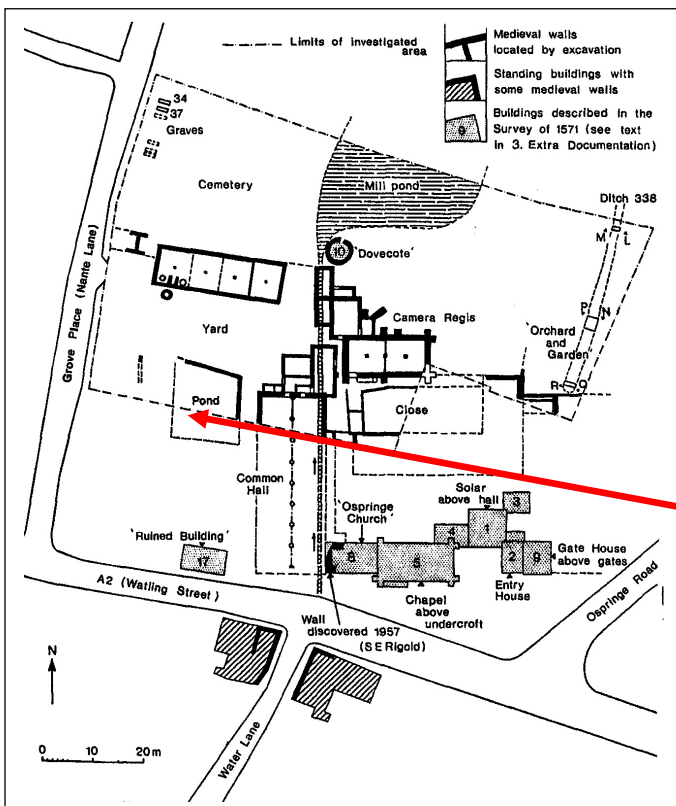
⁶ OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2500



Fig 1b: Location of K43 in 1907.⁷

2. Location of pit

The grassed surface of the paddock shows a distinct pattern of raised areas, explained by the householders as pathways remaining from previous use of the area as allotment gardens. A geo-resistivity survey showed, however, clear traces of a possible underlying structure, probably related to St Marys Hospital (see **Appendix 1**). Rather than excavate in the paddock, which may at some time in the future be a development site and therefore excavated professionally, it was decided to dig in the rear garden of number 22, although the land level was somewhat higher due to levelling work for the lawn.



K43 was carefully located in line with a raised strip which had also shown up on the geo resistivity results as a possible medieval structure.

Fig 2: Suggested layout of St Marys of Ospringe taken from Smith 1977.⁸

Location of K43

⁷ OS 1907 Sheet XXXIV Scale: 1:2500

⁸ Smith 1980 op cit

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. At a depth of around 30cm a salt glazed drainage pipe was revealed running north to south. This was recovered and the pit extended 0.5m to the west and re-measured to the corners of the house. The keyhole was then excavated to the maximum safety depth of 1.2m. 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.

4. The findings

The first context [01] was friable, fine grained dark brown soil with a high ash content and small to medium sized inclusions of building materials, pebbles and chalk, across the whole pit. Context [02] was a looser mix, with a hump of building material and bottle glass fragments over the eastern half [03]: this proved to be over the pipe. This pipe had no obvious connection with manholes and other known pipes in the garden. [04] and [05] were the infill and cut of the pipe trench. They were recorded and then this half of the pit was back filled and the western half extended (see above).

The large amount of pottery found in contexts [01] - [04] was nearly all 17th - 19th century red wares or transfer decorated blue and white 19th century Staffordshire mass produced. A single sherd of medieval and two sherds of Roman pottery were found mixed in with this. Other finds included a 1925 George V half penny, a small cast copper alloy boot buckle c 1720-1790, a lead disc with raised cross, probably 17th century and two copper alloy lace ends. An unusual find from [03] was the nib part of a quill pen.

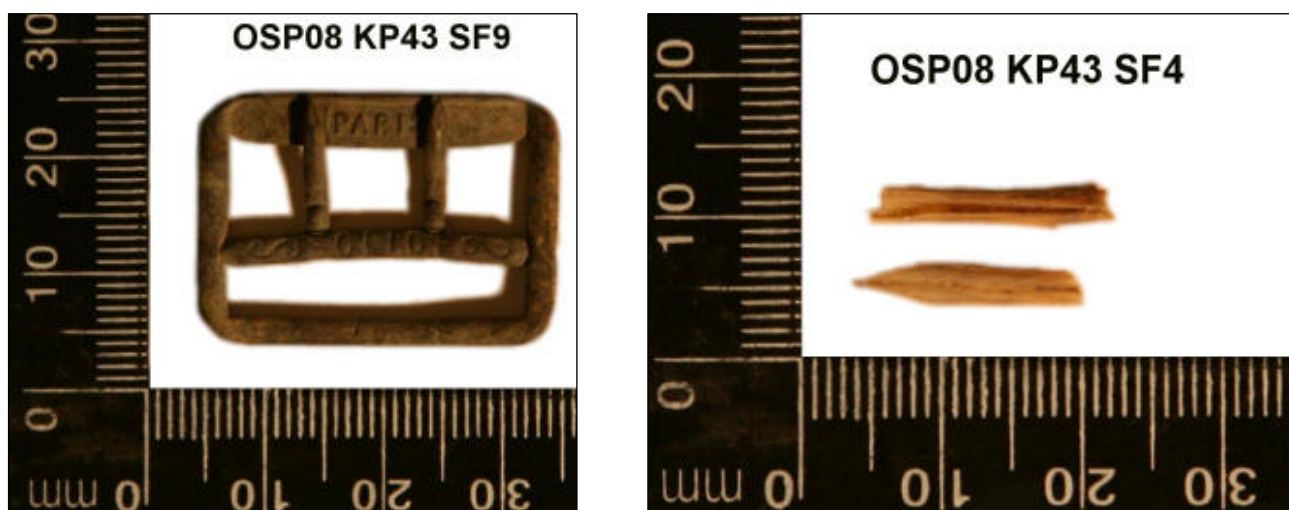


Fig 3: 18th century buckle⁹ and undated quill pen nib.

Beneath [03], chalk inclusions greatly increase particularly against the northern baulk. When taken down another 10cm, a consolidated chalk surface was revealed [07] with a distinct edge around 60cm from the north baulk, running east-west across the keyhole. Further excavation followed this chalk down to the south where it formed another level surface 10cm further down, occupying the south east corner of the keyhole. Excavation in the south west corner showed that this chalk was adjacent to or lay on top of a level bed of small flints and pebbles. [08], at a depth of 1.2m. Although some post medieval and later pottery was found at their level. There were also some sherds of medieval and late medieval wares.

The chalk and flint features were cleaned up but left unexcavated.

⁹ Whitehead, R. 2003 *Buckles* Greenlight Publishing p114 diag.733

A considerable amount of animal bone was recovered from contexts [01] - [07] some showing evidence of butchery and other arthritic ageing. Shell was notable by its absence (we usually find masses in Faversham area pit). Clay pipe fragments were found at all levels but no significant dating conclusions could be drawn from them.

Fig 4: Viewing westwards. The two level chalk features is clearly visible with the flint surface, lower still, at the far top left.



5. Interpretation

After the false start caused by the pipe, this excavation was straightforward. The consolidated chalk features followed the exact line of the raised areas evident in the paddock. The two levels of the chalk surface may be related to a robbed out foundation for the lower part and an internal floor level for the higher surface. The flint / pebble area may be part of a courtyard surface outside the building.

6. Final comment

This little keyhole and the geo resistivity survey do need to be referred to any archaeologist undertaking a review of the St Marys Hospital site, whether in mitigation of development or for more academic purposes.

7. Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for the help and cheerful support of the Barkaway family and their employees, and only sorry that we did not find the desired gold cup!

Keith Robinson

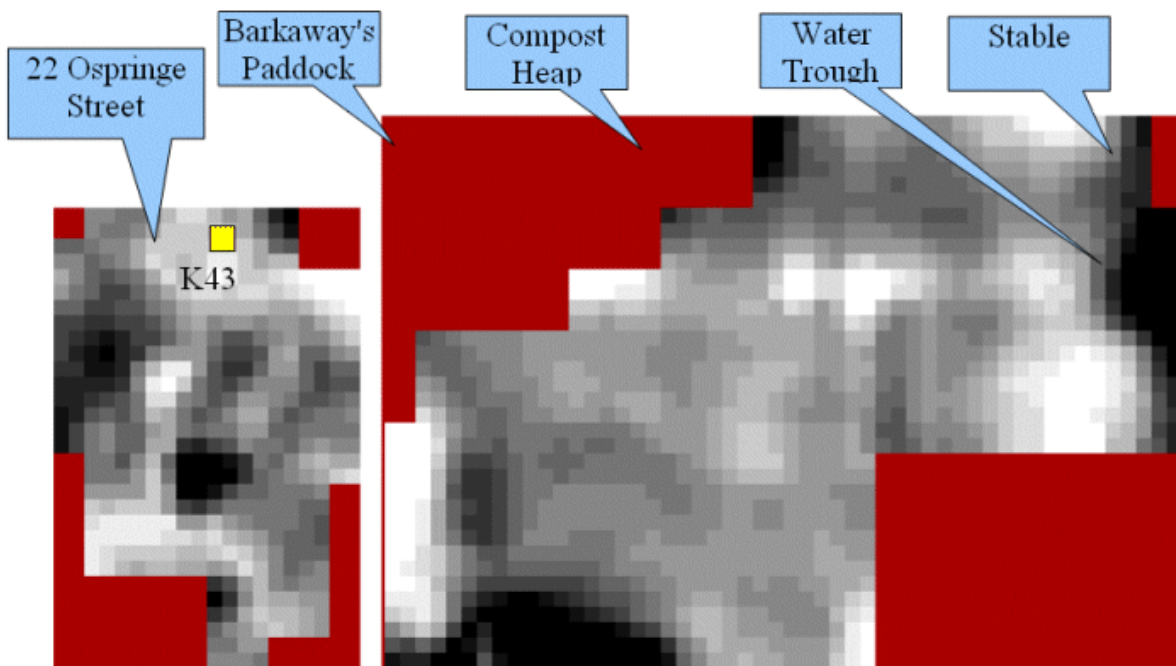
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Appendix 1

Resistivity Plots for Barkaways paddock and the garden of 20-22 Ospringe St.¹⁰

The plots of both sites are shown below. The two sets of data have been normalised to give the same range of shading (compensating for the different moisture conditions on the two dates). Light shading indicates high resistance (dry) and dark shading low resistance (wet). The data has been interpolated to aid visualisation of the features.

The features shown as path are ridges in that are visible on the ground and in the aerial photograph below. They seem to be quite narrow for paths and may be the top edge of a wall. The feature extends into the garden of 22 Ospringe Street (also known as Watling Street), where it is not visible on the surface.



¹⁰ Clarkstone J 2008 Resistance Survey Report for Barkaways, Ospringe FSARG Faversham. Forthcoming online www.community-archaeology.org.uk

Small Finds



SF2



SF3



SF4



SF5



SF6



SF8



SF9



SF11



SF12

Small Finds Details.

- SF2: 1925 halfpenny. Obverse: George V.
- SF3: Very poor condition coin. Verdigris coating makes identification and dating impossible.
- SF4: Assumed to be writing end of feather quill. Evidence of shaping/splitting but no evidence of handle. Feather type unknown.
- SF5: Lace chapes made from one sheet of copper alloy bent into a cylinder. (1) is narrower at one end. (Possibly medieval? Southampton Museum of Archaeology ref:)* (2) is flattened - presumably in situ. No evidence of leather or cord. Could have been used for footwear or clothing (called points). *<http://SCCWWW1.southampton.gov.uk/archaeology> (Southampton City Council).
- SF6: Copper alloy cast rod, slightly curved with one end slightly expanded and the other broken. Square cross section. Purpose unknown. Slight taper towards broken end. See also SF36.
- SF8: Lead token with raised cross. Possibly 17th / 18th Century and used for hop pickers' payment. (Ref: Finds Identified by Gorden Bailey p10 and similar design p15 Fig. 21). More likely to have been cast than stamped, therefore, unlikely to be Medieval. May also have been used by hop pickers for small purchases or gambling (p14). If Medieval (unlikely - too crude) could have been used for payment for food / accommodation by pilgrims (See Tokens and Tallies through the ages - Fletcher p28 and similar example p31).
- SF9: Cast copper alloy rectangular boot/garter buckle with double spiked tongue. (Ref: Ross Whitehead 2003 page,114 diagram no. 733). Two pin buckle with name Paris Solide, c1800. Ref: <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/glevumdetecting/buckles.htm>

- SF11: The coin is in very poor condition, with Verdigris making identification impossible. Date unknown.
- SF12: This is a folded copper alloy disc, with highly corroded edges and purpose unidentifiable.