



Preston: A Most Peculiar Parish PSN13

Report for Keyhole Excavation KP97 57 Preston Street, Faversham

Grid Reference TR 01477 61033



Sieving in the garden of No 57 Preston Street, July 2013.

1. Introduction

Preston: a Most Peculiar Parish is a new project starting in 2013 and planned to run for at least two and probably three years. FSARG will be working in the part of the parish known as Preston Within or Preston Next Faversham. Although nowadays included in the domain of Faversham Borough, the parish of Preston has a long history of its own with some astonishingly early documentary mentions e.g. in AD822 when the parish is donated to Christchurch, Canterbury.¹

St Catherines, the parish church, is undoubtedly a very ancient foundation with both archaeological and documentary evidence putting its foundation well back into the Saxon period. Given the proximity of the rich Saxon Kingsfield cemetery looted by brickfield workers and railway builders in the mid 19th century², some interesting questions are raised about this church and the area around it during these early times.

The aims in 2013 have been to examine the evidence for medieval land use along the line of Preston Street- the Mall. This is the shortest route joining Faversham town centre and the quays of the Creek to Watling Street running west to Rochester-London and east to Canterbury- Dover. This line forms the western boundary of Preston Within. Almost no proper archaeological work has been done along the Preston Street-Mall line, with only the looting (as mentioned above) and a few stray or accidental finds mostly of Roman burial material giving any information at all.³ The main aim of the work in 2013 was to uncover medieval levels at well spaced points along the line and see whether the evidence was for habitation or agriculture or both.

KP97 was located in the garden of Number 57 Preston Street. This garden lies in the block that also contains such splendid (by Faversham standards) properties as Shepherd House (1814) and Chase House (1803). Number 57 itself is one of a pair of houses, squeezed in between Shepherd House and the Chimney Boy public house.



Fig 1: Front view of the property (November 2013). No 57 on the left of the photograph.

¹ Hasted 1798 *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* Vol 6 pp532-49 on Preston

² Richardson A 2005 *The Anglo Saxon Cemeteries of Kent* Vol 1 BAR British series 391

³ E.g. HER TR06 SW17 Romano British flagon found on building site of Argosy Cinema. See also FSARG 2013 report for KP101 (Old Wine Vaults)

2. Geographical and historical background

a) Geography

The property at 57 Preston Street lies in the Parish of Preston Within, at the South western end on Preston Street, about 50m from its junction with Station Road and at an altitude of 14.7m OD. The house fronts directly onto Preston Street, with the garden at the rear facing west to the car park. The house is at a markedly lower level than the garden, which forms a level plot with the garden of Shepherd House at 17 metres OD. The garden is also at a much higher level than the plot occupied by the Chimney Boy Public House, next door and downhill to the north, with the soil held back by a tall retaining wall 5m high at maximum.

b) Geology

1:50 000 scale bedrock geology description⁴: Seaford Chalk Formation - Chalk. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 84 to 89 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Local environment previously dominated by warm chalk seas.

Setting: warm chalk seas. These rocks were formed in warm shallow 'Chalk' shelf seas with little sediment input from land. They often consist of a calcareous ooze of the microscopic remains of plankton. The chalk strata dip to the North.

1:50 000 scale superficial deposits description: Head - Clay and Silt (Brickearth) Superficial Deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (Ice Ages) Local environment previously dominated by sub aerial slopes.

Setting: sub aerial slopes. These rocks were formed from the material accumulated by down slope movements including landslide, debris flow, solifluction, soil creep and hill wash.



British Geological Survey © NERC

Fig 2: Map of 1872 showing extent of brickearth (pale yellow with black spots) and Thanet beds (brown with yellow spots).⁵

c) Known historical background (X shows location of KP97)

In 1645 a large property occupied the site from 55 to 58 Preston Street; this was divided up and sold in 1803 (see Fig 3a). The original buildings were demolished.

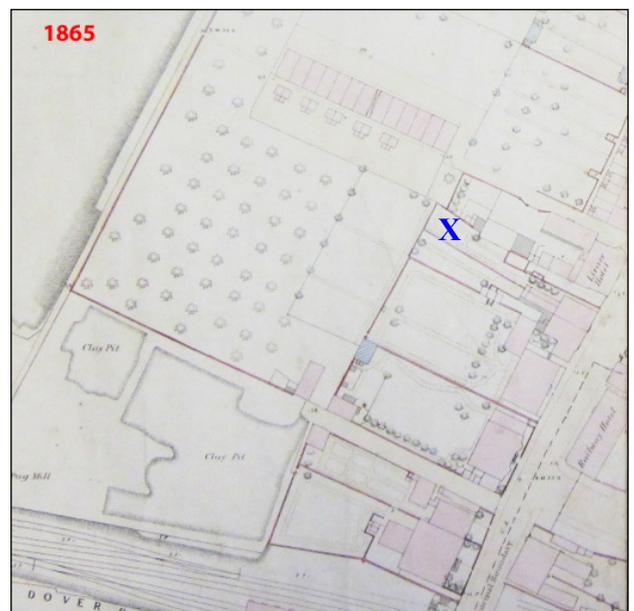
⁴ British Geological Survey materials c NERC 2013

Fig 3a:) to right: from Jacobs's map of Faversham 1774⁶
 b: Below: from the Faversham parish 1839 tithe map⁷



The pair of houses No's 57 and 58 Preston Street was built by Thomas Barnes in 1808 / 9, although there is some doubt about this (Stevens, for example, gives 1847 as the building date)⁸ the 1839 tithe map shows a house on plot number 151 for both 57-58 with Thomas Lemon as the tenant. By 1862 two of Thomas Barnes sons lived here in 57 and 58 respectively.⁹ The style of the house front today implies that it was at one time a single property, as the houses are of unequal size (see Fig 1).¹⁰

Fig 4: No 57 in wider context in 1865. Note the arrival of the railway just to the south, the clay pits to the south and the edge of the extraction area to the west.



At the 1839 stage, Numbers 57 and 58 are shown as one building, with a complicated overlapping boundary arrangement with what had become the Vicarage next door. By 1865, the long building at the back of Number 57 has gone and the property is shown as two semidetached houses with a garden boundary in between. This arrangement has survived until now (2013).

Interestingly, the geology map produced in 1872 (Fig 2) shows brick yards in the land behind this property, where the 1865 map shows an orchard on the land behind. A wider look at the very detailed 1865 map, however, shows that the orchard bordered onto the brickyards excavation area to the west, with the cut edge clearly showing. This sharp drop can still be seen along the end of the gardens of the properties on the east side of Roman Road. To the south west are large clay pits on the site now occupied by the Forbes Road garage and the Forbes Road underpass (neither present in 1865).

⁶ Jacobs E 1774 ⁶ Jacobs E, 1774, *History of Faversham* reprint 1974 Faversham Society map of Faversham

⁷ Preston near Faversham Tithe Award Schedule and maps 1840. KAS/ KCC archives.

OS Ordnance Survey 1865 Sheet XXXIV.10.1

⁸ Stevens P 1998 *A record of Preston and Preston Street* Faversham Paper No 62 Faversham Society p47

⁹ Stevens P 1998 op. cit.

¹⁰ Owen, John pers.comm.



Fig 4: Wider context in 1907.¹¹

This map shows the area is now mainly built up.

The brick industry has gone but a piece of the orchard survives.

Forbes Road and its underpass have arrived.

Fig 5: Aerial photograph from 1946.¹²

The whole orchard area has become allotments.

Dig for Victory!



3. Location of pit

A geo resistivity survey was carried out in the garden prior to deciding on the location of the keyhole pit. The results of this survey were overlain on a map showing the garden. An area of strong resistance was chosen in which to situate the pit.

The pit was located in the rear garden, approximately 12m from the north wall, and 9m from the boundary with the car park. Measurements were taken from each of the corners to identifiable points within the garden.

¹¹ OS Ordnance Survey 1906 Sheet XXXIV .10

¹² by kind permission of the KCC Aerial Photograph archive.



Fig 6: Geo-resistivity survey results for Shepherds House and No 57 (circled). Location of pit KP97 shown as red rectangle.¹³

4. The procedures

A 2m by 1m rectangle 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 keyhole was excavated to a depth of 1m, with a central slot 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.

5. The findings

Context numbers are shown inside square brackets. The turf [1] which extended to about 5cm below the surface was removed and stored as described above. A few inclusions were found, including some small pieces of pottery, some metal, glass and coal. A corroded 1944 George VI halfpenny was found.

Immediately below this was a layer about 25cm thick of compact dark grey ashy soil, with significant fragments of brick and tile, and coal [2]. A range of pottery fragments were found from early medieval to 19th century, the latter (1800 to present) being very much dominant. Glass, slate and flint were also found, a small quantity of bone and two teeth. A Shepherd Neame beer bottle stopper was found, but with no clear dating evidence. Also part of a toothpaste tube, which could be dated to 1954. It was shown to be an American product.¹⁴

A blue enamelled lapel badge for 'The Ferguson System' was found. Unfortunately, it was found damaged but still identifiable. An internet search showed it to be made by Gladman and Norman in Birmingham, sometime between 1950 and 1959.¹⁵ Pieces of lead 'came' from a window were found.

The soil colour began to change below 30cm, becoming more brownish yellow [3]. In the centre of the pit a significant number of bricks were found [8]. Continued excavation into this area revealed that at some time a hole had been cut into this soil layer, down to a depth of 60cm from the surface [4] and infilled with various building materials [8]. Bricks (all broken), mortar, stone and slate had been thrown in,

¹³ Aerial photograph from Google Earth 2013.

¹⁴ Ammi-i-dent: TV advert from 1954 on Youtube, and other online references.

¹⁵ www.ebay.com/Vintage-Ferguson-System-Tractor-Badge-Farming-Massey-/00 date 1.6.2013

together with a few pieces of glass, pottery, nail and sheets metal. A brush handle, no bristles, was also found. Research found that this was marked 'made in Holland' and would have dated from between 1850 and 1900. The material of the handle was of a creamy consistency, probably ivory, and the brush was probably used for polishing silver or filigree. It would originally have had horsehair bristles.



**Fig 7: Dumped material or path foundation?
Shown with context [5] removed on both sides.**

At 45cm depth, down to 53cm, the soil was similar to that above but differed in its inclusions and colouring [5]. The pottery was found to be the most diverse in of all layers, with the percentage of the older early and late medieval (1050 to 1550) increasing, although no precise dating evidence was found. Lead window 'comes' were found.

Below this layer early pottery became significant, (particularly medieval 1225 to 1400), together with many more bone fragments, and heat stressed flint. This 30cm deep layer of soil was finer, firm with more clay and silt [6]. The soil then became more yellow sandy clay and firmly compacted, very much akin to brickearth, with very few inclusions of human origin. Only early medieval and medieval pottery was significant (AD 1050 to 1400). Some bone and flint were found. These inclusions became less with depth.



Fig 8: The north side of the pit showing the whole profile, with the contexts labelled.

At about 90cm from the surface the only inclusions found were some worked flints and small amounts of medieval pottery. The matrix here was a brighter orange-brown fine silty soil, classic brickearth. This layer was given the number [7].

A slot was then cut down to a further 20cm to ensure we had dug through into the natural deposits, which were designated [9].

6. Interpretation

KP 97 was a relatively straightforward one to interpret. Each context revealed the soil building up over time, with the natural geology at the base of the pit, the medieval layers following, and the more recent near the surface. Some mixing of the artefacts from differing layers has occurred, but a clear split between contexts [6] and [5] about 50cm below the modern surface showed evidence of medieval occupation. This was clearly shown by the pottery assemblage. Other former occupational (garden) levels could be recognised in the profile (see **Appendix 1**).



Fig 9: The last stage, confirming the pre-medieval soil at [7] and revealing [9], the natural soil.

Context [8], filling the cut [4], dates to the mid 19th century at earliest. It corresponds to the line of high resistivity on the geo-resistivity chart for this garden and looks very much like a rough and ready path. The bricks, presumably from a nearby demolition, are hard red frogged bricks whose dimensions indicate a mid 19th century date. Thus, they do not come from the earlier building that was replaced by No's 57 - 58, which had 17th - 18th century bricks. Perhaps this debris came from the long narrow building shown on the 1839 but gone by 1865 although it could well be from a later building. The lead window 'comes' found in contexts [1], [2] and [5], however, are more likely to have come from the demolition of the older building (the shape and thickness can be a guide to their age, but in this case could not be interpreted).

The coin, toothpaste and beer bottle top represent life after the turn of the 20th century, as do all the finds in the top layers [1] and [2].

At the base of the pit, the lowest layer [7] had large wormholes which perhaps explain the presence of very small sherds of medieval pottery. The presence, however, of a number of worked flints, waste flakes and heat stressed flint was, however, not explicable in this way and this has to be thought of as a prehistoric level. The ages of the finished flints were, however, varied - they included two leaf shaped arrowheads for the Early Neolithic (6,000 years ago), and a couple of Late Bronze Age scrapers (3,000 years ago). In layers [6] and [5] above were a number of small Mesolithic tools (around 7000 years ago), presumably residual.

The sondage slot shown in **Fig 9** produced no inclusions at all and the deposit revealed was assumed to be the natural soil.

7. Final comments

Before backfilling of the pit, the home owner's children placed a time capsule at the bottom of the slot - a surprise from 2013 for anyone in the future digging in the garden and a help to future archaeologists.

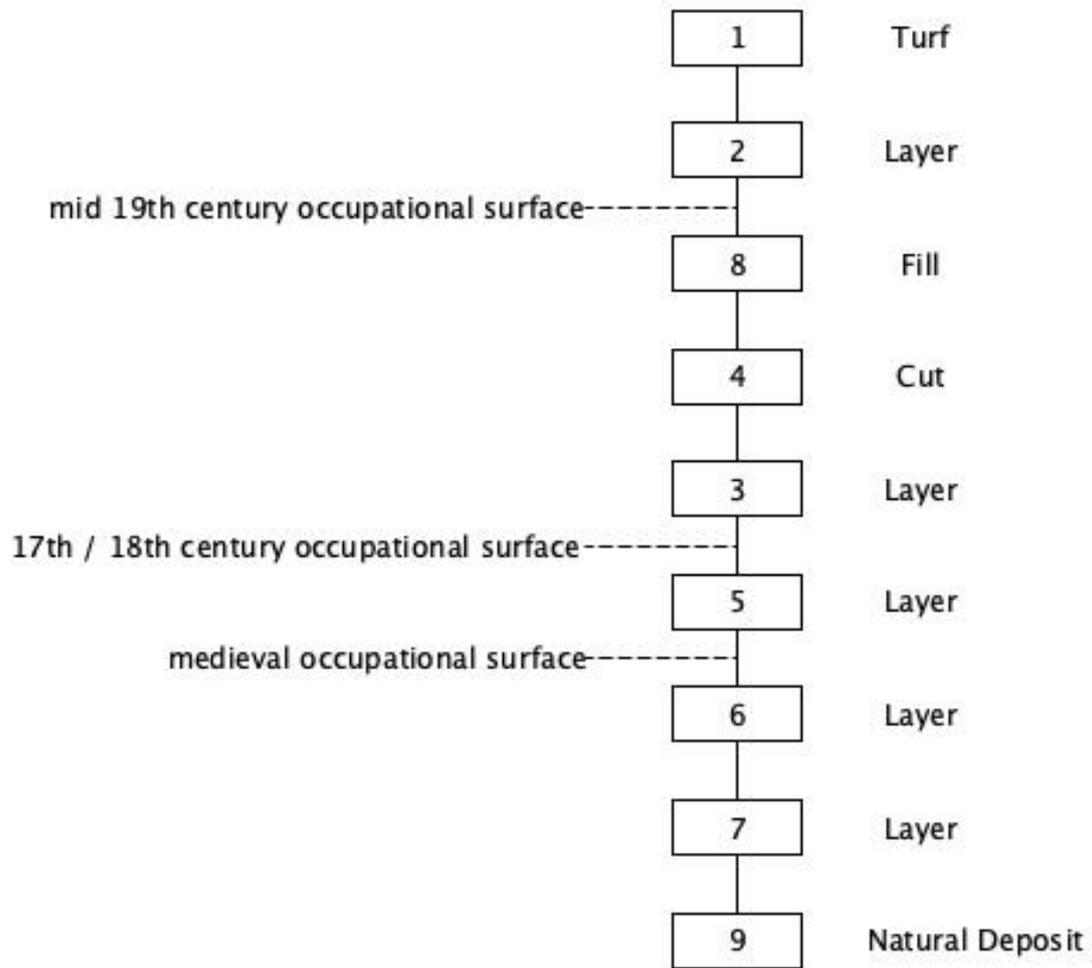
8. Acknowledgments

Great thanks to Martina and Matthew Hatchwell and family for the kind permission to dig in their secluded garden and taking so much interest in what we found.

Shelagh Wilson

November 2013

**Appendix 1:
The Harris Matrix for KP 97**



**Appendix 2:
KP 97 Small Finds**

Small Finds No.	Context No.	Simple Name	Material(s)	Written Description	Earliest Date	Latest Date
8	02	Badge	Die-cast metal	Blue enamelled lapel badge: 'The Ferguson System'. Due to corrosion, most of the enamel and the securing pin are missing. Maker: Gladman and Norman, Birmingham.	1950	1959
9	02	Eyelet	Copper Alloy	An oval eyelet: two parts are held together with tabs?	?	?
10	?	Metal fragment	LEAD	A small piece of lead, possibly solder - a misshapen lump, which looks like a molten drop that has subsequently been bent.	undatable	undatable
11	03	Coin	Copper Alloy	A George VI 1944 halfpenny; shows a ship on the reverse side. Corroded, rendering 25% unreadable.	1944	1944
12	04	Handle	Ivory	A long, thin, creamy-coloured brush handle, with bristle holes on a convex face; the remaining bristles are very fine. The three rows of holes are unevenly spaced; Two rows have 25 holes; one row has 24. The handle is marked 'Made in Holland'. On the concave side there are parallel slots for threading bristles. It is possibly for polishing silver or filigree, and would have had horsehair bristles.	1850	1900
13	02	Metal tube	Lead/tin alloy	Half / third of a metal toothpaste tube, bottom section only, painted white with blue lettering. The base is painted blue with white lettering. ingredients: 13% carbamide (synthetic urea), 3% Dibasic ammonium phosphate. Ref: e-bay sales site. TV advert: Ytube 1954.	1954	1954
14	02	Threaded bottle stopper	Composite	Shepherd Neame & Co. beer bottle stopper with brewer name with SN interlaced in shield indented on top face. Knurled edge to assist opening. Two complete turns on screw part. No rubber washer was found. References: www sites: Historic glass bottle identification & information; www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm. There is some damage to the inner end of the screw.	mid 1800s	mid/late 20c
15	06	Window lead	Lead	Weights: 3.89g & 4.11g. Two pieces of came from stained or plain glass windows. Fragment 1 seems to be half of a piece of N section. Fragment 2 seems to be a piece of full H section. Both may be early in date as the flashing removal suggests a diamond shape to each wall with flash. Both are squashed and twisted. 1 has signs of removal of moulding flashing along edge and may be pre-machine-made. See also SF 156 for details and references.	13C	Late 20c
16	01	Lead came	Lead	Elongated strip of lead(?) with slightly curved cross-section - possibly broken down long ragged edge. There are faint milling marks on inside of curve - 0.1mm apart. Lead milling began c. late 15C. Also see SF15.	AD1500	late 20c
17	05	Came	Lead	1: T-shape, 2-23 pieces welded together -- 23.81g; 48.8mm x 56.2mm x 16.7mm. Squashed collection of comes. 2: 3.2g, 35.1mm x 10.2mm x 6.7mm - squashed. 3: 3.57g, 34.3mm x 9.5mm x 8.7mm - twisted.	13C	late 20c