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The Faversham Society
Archaeological Research Group

Community
Archaeology



Hunt the Saxons HSX17

Report for Keyhole KP155

39 Court Street, Faversham 15th July-21st 2017

Grid Reference TR 01653 61459



Fig 1: Image of 39 Court St, blue pin shows site of KP155.

1. Introduction

The main aim of the HSX17 project is to locate the Royal Manor complex of mid Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Saxon-Norman times within Faversham. KP155 was approximately 190m from the parish church of St Mary of Charity (known as Our Lady of Faversham in Medieval times when churches developed from chapels attached to Manor Houses). It is about the same distance to the Post Office at which the only verified mid-Anglo-Saxon artefact in Faversham was found during redevelopment in the 1950s: this was an 8th century loom weight.¹ Closer to KP155, a Late Iron Age ditch was found when the Tesco petrol station was built in 1995. 39 Court Street itself fronts onto the widened road that is Faversham's market place, a market that goes back to the Domesday Book² and still runs every Friday, Saturday and Tuesday.

2. Geographical and historical background

In this section, the location of 39 Court Street on the maps is shown by a star ☆

a) Geography

The land between the Westbrook and Cooksditch valleys is a slope running down from 24m altitude at Watling Street to the south to 9m at St Marys church and 7m at Standard Quay, a total distance of 1.5km. This slightly higher ground falls away to either side, westward to the Westbrook Valley and eastward to the Cooksditch, both streams running south to north. The Cooksditch nowadays rises in a spring to the east of St Marys School and runs down past the Abbey Barns, and joins Faversham Creek at Iron Wharf, Grid Reference TR 012354 62131. The garden area is to the east of 39 Court Street, slightly elevated from the street level of Crescent Road.

b) Geology

The pit is in an area of clay and relatively recent brick earth deposits, sitting on top of the Upper Chalk which is dipping northwards.³ In the map below the alluvium-filled Westbrook Valley shows clearly to the west with the Davington Plateau beyond.



Fig 2: Geological map of central Faversham.

Blue: Thanet Sands
Orange: Head Gravels
Light Green: Chalk
Yellow: Head brickearth
Cream: Alluvium

¹ Reid P 2018 *Faversham in the making* Oxbow books: Oxford p 82.

² Williams & Martin (eds) *The Domesday Book: a Complete Translation* Penguin Books: London p 7.

³ British Geological Survey: Faversham England and Wales Sheet 273 Solid and Drift Edition. 1: 50000.

c) Known historical background

39 Court Street is a Grade 2 listed, timber framed, jettied property built in the 1500s. This was a period of great change in Faversham that saw the demolition of Faversham Abbey soon after 1538 and the power of the Town through the rejuvenation of the mayoral and jurats system. At this time, a new courthouse and gaol was built at the town end of Abbey Street, with that stretch of Abbey Street renamed Court Street. Recent archaeology close to No 39 by Southern Water revealed what is thought to be part of the gaol dungeon – see **Fig 3**.

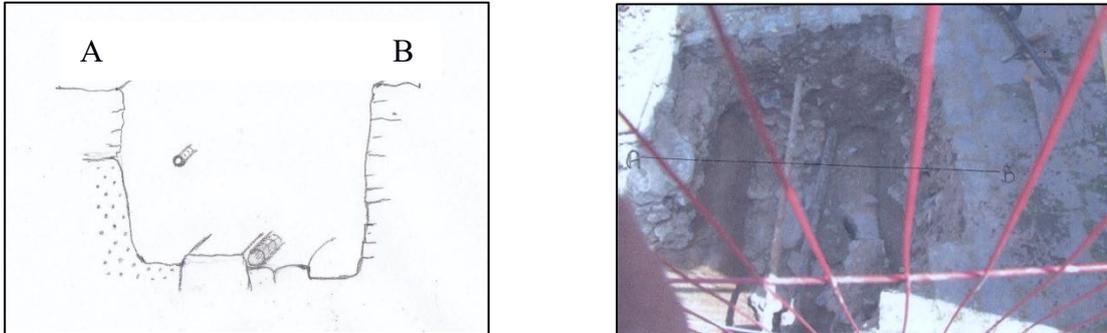
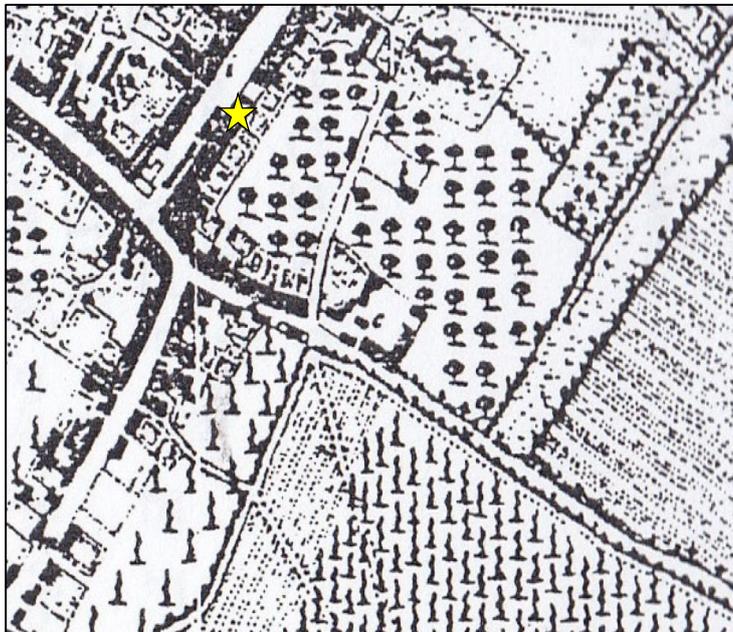


Fig 3: Water Board excavations close to 39 Court Street showing masonry at lower levels. Scale 1:30

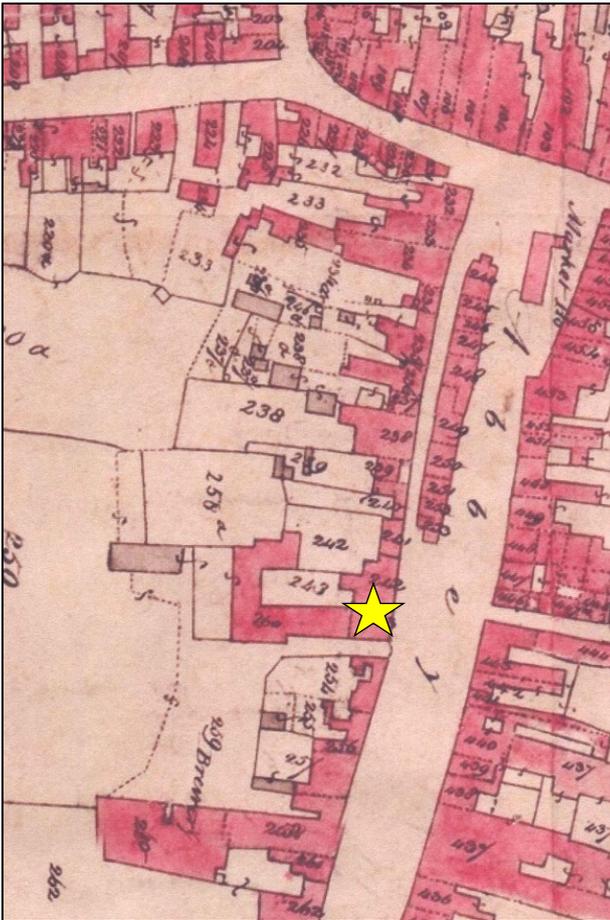
The garden is on the site of the Maltings owned by Rigden's Brewery which after 1884 became a Cider Factory. The construction of Crescent Road in the 1960s (see e below) does not appear to have affected this garden area.

Fig 4: Map Regression for 39 Court Street. The site of KP155 is shown by a yellow star.



a) Jacob's 1774 map of Faversham

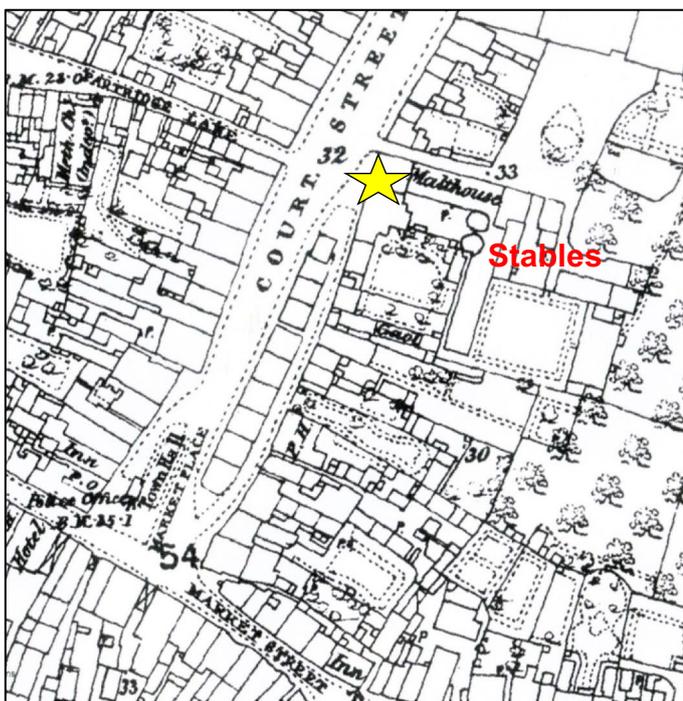
The street layout in central Faversham is much the same as today except, of course, for the absent Crescent. At this stage, 39 Court Street backs onto orchard which runs across to Church Road. Hops are also growing close to the town centre.



b) 1842 tithe map

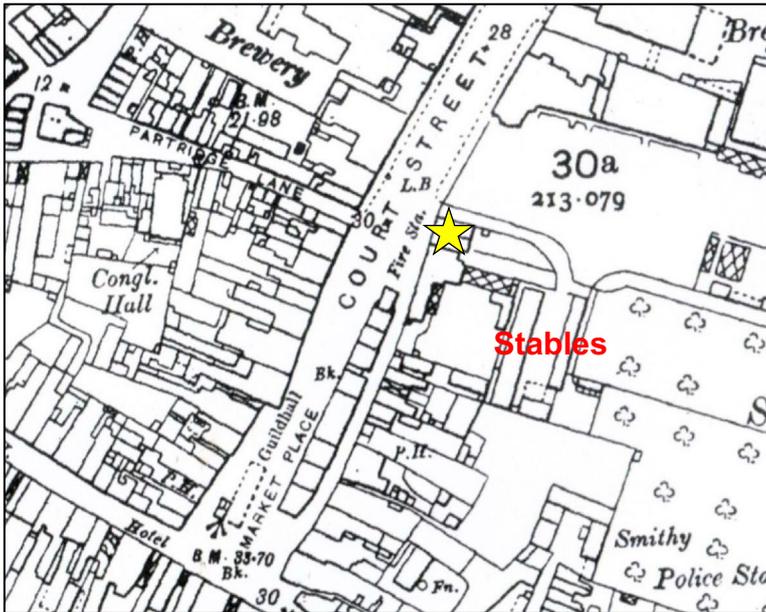
This is a useful map as it separately lists every property in the town at the time, who owns it, who lives there and the character of the property. For the area around 39 Court Street details are given below. At that time, what is now 39 was part of a house on the 243 plot, owned by Rigdens. At the rear is a yard and warehouse owned by the brewery. The Malthouse is several doors along Court Street.

Tithe map number	Use of property	Owner & tenant
242	House and garden	Robert Lukyn and another
243	House and garden	Rigdens Brewery
259	Malthouse and orchard	Rigdens Brewery
260	Yard and buildings	Rigdens Brewery



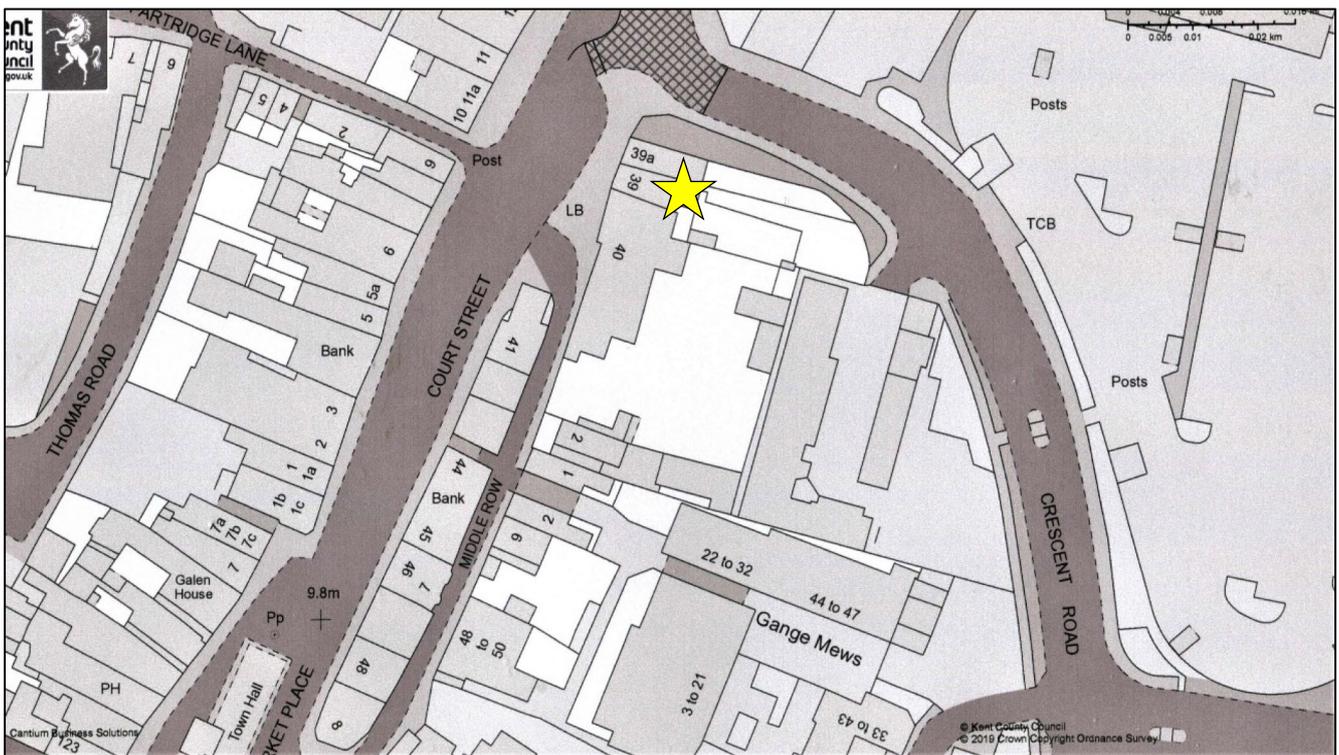
c) OS 1871 6" to the mile

The Malthouse has moved to occupy the land at the rear of 39 - 40 Court Street with a complex of buildings but orchard is still close by. Many of the nearby properties have ornamental gardens with paths and trees.



d) OS 1907 6" to mile.

The starred property has now been divided to two, with separate gardens at the rear. The Rigdens malthouse has gone, presumably to become part of the huge Rigdens complex just to the north where the letters *Bre..* can be seen. The Brewery on the other side of Court Street is Shepherd Neame.



e) OS 2009 25" to mile

This large scale and clear map shows central Faversham as it is nowadays. Crescent Road has arrived, allowing traffic to bypass the centre. Beyond Crescent Road is the car park for Tesco which has taken over the Rigdens building. The stables buildings still exist but with a variety of voluntary functions. The space just south of this in map (d) is occupied by Gange Mews, attractive flats for the elderly. The Smithy, unsurprisingly, has gone.

3. Location of pit

The pit was in the garden area to the east of 39 Court St, running North-South. We elected to position the pit on the grass area due to the layout of the garden, which had a patio, a path and mature trees in the border.

4. The procedures

A 1m by 0.6m rectangle was pegged out and the area delineated with string. The position of the rectangle was recorded by measuring to mapped points within the garden (see FSARG Pit and Geophysics Location record (2015) HSX17 KP155). The turf was removed. The pit was excavated using a mix of 'spits' and contexts, each which was fully recorded. The maximum depth of the pit was 1.25m. All excavated soil was carefully sieved. Finds were set aside for each spit / context. Features revealed were carefully recorded. Finally, the spoil was put back in, turf re-laid and watered.

5. The findings

Initially a 'Spit' (an area evenly excavated to a depth of 15cm) was dug. Spit 1 was poor grade topsoil mainly containing garden soil with Ceramic Building Material (CBM) comprising 35% of finds. Other finds consisted of Mortar (25% of finds) and Clinker / coal (20% of finds) with small amounts of pottery, lithics (4 worked pieces), shell and slate. The Lithic dated from Bronze Age to Mesolithic. A small metal button dated to either 1720 - 1790 or identified as a "last round stopend" (Medieval) was found during post-excavational sorting. Pottery was identified as Medieval to Late Post Medieval. Medieval pottery included Tudor Green, Tyler Hill and Biddenden Sandyware, with Westerwald in the Post Medieval.

Context [2] was dug to a depth of 0.2m (0.35m total depth) and was very similar to Spit 1 in contents. Pottery finds consisted of one piece of Roman, then ranged from Medieval to Late Post Medieval. Medieval included Tyler Hill and Borderware. One Mesolithic microlith was identified. Context [3] was dug to a depth of 0.2m (0.55m total depth) and was very similar to Spit 1 and context 2. *Retrospectively it was considered that Spit 1 and Contexts [2] and [3] were the same layer.* A small amount of Clay Tobacco Pipe was found in Spit 1, [2] and [3].

Context [4] was dug to a depth of 0.5m total depth and was a firm, dull and dark layer with well sorted finds, featuring specks of bone and shell. Again CBM (38%), mortar, (20%) and coal / coke / clinker (18%) dominated finds. Pottery finds included two pieces of Roman, then ranged from Medieval to Late Post Medieval. At a depth of 0.3m, in the west wall of the pit a void appeared, Cut [5] (no fill). This was not examined since it led outside the boundary of the pit.



Fig 5: Showing bottom of context [4] with the void Cut 5 on the west side.

Changes were noted to [4] at a depth of approximately 0.6m in the north [6] and 0.7m at the south of the pit [7]. The north end was drier than the South and had orangey spots. The southern end was darker and grittier. There was no definite boundary between the two contexts to begin with but it soon became apparent that context [7] was a pit with a high quantity of mortar and burnt coke / coal. [6] was a more solid, yellowy-orange, clay mixed with garden soil. The cut number [12] was later assigned to containing fill [7].



Fig 6: Contexts [6] (left) and [7] (right). Cut [12] in between.

A sondage was then created east-west across the pit into [6] at 0.3m from the north end and going down another 0.2m. Finds were consistent with [6]. At approximately 0.7m we found a surface comprising of a layer of peg-tiles with a small amount of slate (context [8]). Beneath was a mortar surface with several pieces of dark pottery (context [10]). Both context [8] and [10] extended 0.4m from the north end of the pit. To the south of this, [6] continued downwards but was itself cut by pit [7] [12]. [6] eventually reached the natural brickearth with finds reducing in number with depth to 0.9m. A large proportion of these finds were building flints with mortar attached (10% lithic, 20% mortar) and CBM (30%). A dainty thimble (1800 – 1920) and the tooth of a comb / tine of a buckle (undatable) were found. Pottery found was Roman, also Late Medieval to Late Post Medieval.

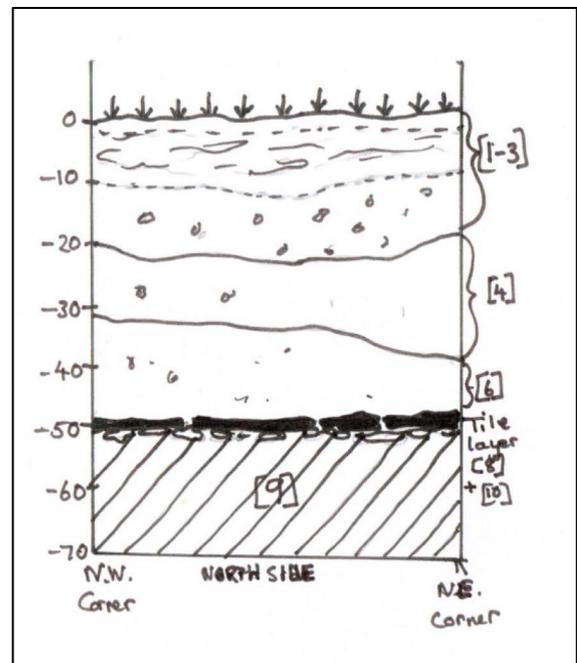
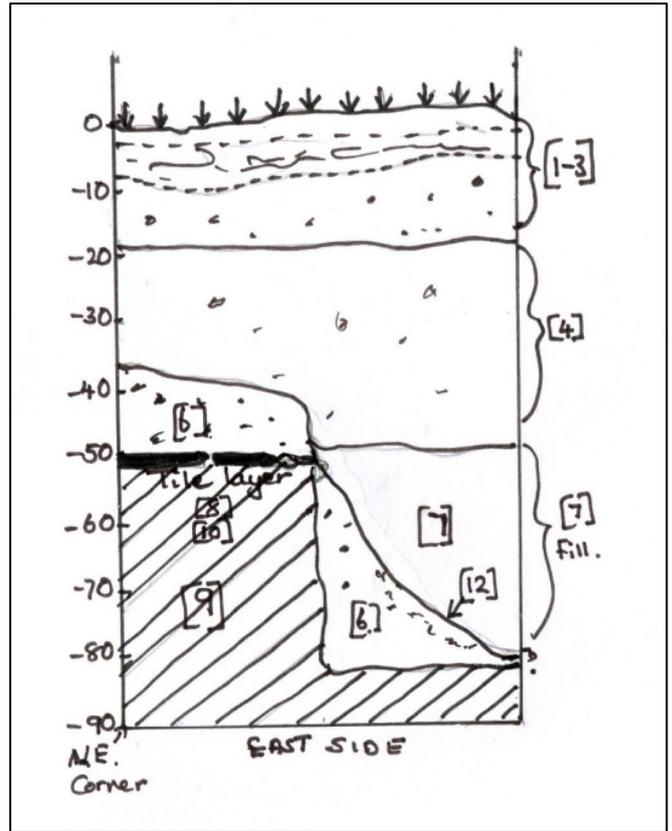


Fig 7: Views of the north end of KP155 showing the relationship between the contexts described and discussed in the text. Scale 1:10 in the 2 sections of the trench sides.

Context [8] was the peg-tile layer. Under [8] was Context [10], which was probably the underlayer for [8]. [8] was topped with 8 pieces of pottery (see **Fig 8**) and comprised 85% lithic half of which had mortar attached. The pottery was a puzzle, its wheel thrown grey sandy-ware, possibly Alice Holt / Farnham

dating from 1st to 4th Century or London Grey Ware⁴. Expert advice has been sought. All seven pieces are from the same pot with four fitting together.



Fig 8: Pottery found in context [10].

Context [7] to the south of the pit was excavated to approximately 1.05m. Much of it was rubble within a dark soil, there were blocks of building chalk (15% finds), CBM (35% finds), Mortar (12%) and concrete (6%) also shells, pottery and metal. Pottery was a complete mixture - Roman, Medieval, Post Medieval, Early Modern. At 1.05m two types of clay were found – a greenish grey soft clay near to the chalk building material and firm brickearth. This was named context [11]. Building material continued to feature and in the South East corner mortared bricks were seen. These formed a structure [14]. [11] was excavated to a depth of 1.3m to enable examination of [14] and at the limit of our safe excavation limit, but probably not the true base of pit [12] or the base of the brick structure. The number [15] was assigned to the natural.



Fig 9 a-d shows the brick domed structure from above the pit (a, b) and from beside the feature (c, d).

⁴ See www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org. OA186 for a very similar find.

The masonry context [14] was a curved circular structure narrowing upwards. The bricks are fixed with mortar. There was a mortar and flint base which was slightly wider than the brick part. At the lowest exposed part, the structure extended 0.2m on the South edge of the pit and 0.45m on the West side. We carefully excavated outside the dimensions of the pit to expose more of the structure to reveal 5 courses of bricks which tapered upwards. It was suggested that the structure could be a cesspit, a chimney, a kiln or a furnace base. The bricks by shape and texture looked early 19th century.

6. Interpretation

The pottery chronology report shows a wide range of pot within each context, each being broadly similar to each other. For example, Roman pot was found in [2] along with Post Medieval and Early Modern pottery in [3]. Roman pot was again found in [5], again with Post Medieval and Early Modern. Throughout each context, clay tobacco pipe was found. This leads us to believe, along with the mix of pottery within each context, this ground was a series of dumped layers.

The earliest dumped layer in this spot would be what was labelled context [6], which was itself, as far as could be seen, sitting on top of probably natural brickearth. At one point in the past [6] was itself partly excavated to lay the tiled 'floor'. The Roman pot in the underlay just below this could have come from a Romano-British burial site - in central Faversham the road leading down from Watling Street in the south towards the villa to the north of this particular spot would have passed close and it is along this route that Roman burials have previously been found. The tiles themselves, however, are peg tiles, probably late medieval or post medieval in date.

This tiled layer quickly became covered with context [6] type material. Then, just to the south of this, a large, deep pit [12] cut, [7] fill, was dug into [6] probably for the construction of the brick domed feature underground. The pit was then filled in with an assortment of chunks of building materials and other bits and pieces from the soil matrix of the infill (see **Fig 9c & d**). Both pit fill [7] and penetrated layer [6] were then covered by a fairly even, light-coloured sandy layer with a chronology-spanning collection of finds. This was covered later with a garden soil type layer, still with a remarkably mixed age of artefacts.

This sequence can be interpreted as showing changes from ornamental garden (context [6] with the tiles [8] [10] being a briefly lived surface before being cut short by the excavation of pit [12]) to heavy industrial (Rigdens malting venture, perhaps construction of a water tank, with a lot going on in the way of demolition and building, [7] [12] [14] and then [4] on top) and then back to a modern garden [1] - [3].

A possible source of the upper 'dump' material could be the rear of the house, which has an excavated patio area, the spoil from this being dumped to the side. This could account for the topsoil [1] - [3] containing early pottery. [4]'s material is likely to have been created by the excavation of [12] to be occupied by the brick feature and then the heavy dumped building materials. Where [6] has come from is much more uncertain - Faversham's exceptionally long and near continuous existence means that Roman, medieval, post medieval pottery and prehistoric flints can easily lie side by side.

6. Final comments

The pit was somewhat difficult to dig due to the confined space, leading to issues where to store the spoil whilst excavating. The weather during the dig was varied with periods of high winds and heavy rain which did affect the digging. It was, however, an extremely interesting pit considering its small size, with quite a complex stratification. It certainly taught the lesson to apprentice archaeologists that being found further down in the ground compared with other items doesn't necessarily mean that it was formed earlier than items much nearer the surface!

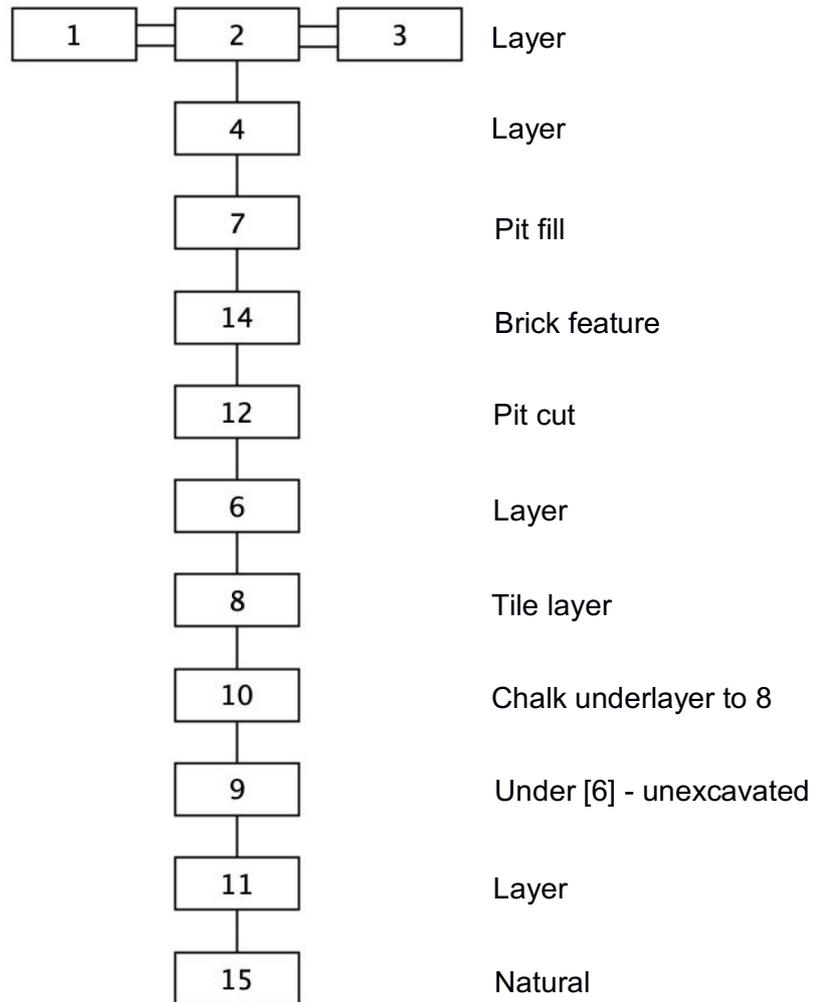
7. Acknowledgements

Great thanks to Alistair Mackay Miller and his wife for allowing us to dig in the garden of this historic property in the heart of Faversham – a rare and valued opportunity.

Heather Wootton & Dr Pat Reid
April 2021



Grateful archaeologists – Carole, Lizzie and Suzanne.

Appendix 1: Harris Matrix

Appendix 2: Pottery Chronology for KP155

(Weights in grams)

CAT code	Dates AD	Spit / Contexts					Total	
		S1 / 2 / 3	4	7	6	10		11
Pre	Pre 43							0
Rom	43 - 410			10	21	74		105
EMS	410 - 700							0
MLS	700 - 850							0
LS	850 - 1050							0
EM	1050 - 1225							0
HM	1225 - 1400	24	6	2		5	9	46
LM	1400 - 1550	9	23					32
PM	1550 - 1800	14		19	28			61
PM / EM redware	1550 - 1900	220	194	115	139	2		670
EM	1800 - now	75	50	125	161	1		412
Uni	any		14					14
Totals		342	287	271	349	82	9	1340

Comments

Spit 1 / context 2 & 3: small piece Westerwald, 1 Bellarmine, 1 Tudor green, 1 Biddenden sandy ware, 3 Tyler Hill
 Context 4: stoneware slipware
 Context 7: post-med stoneware, tin glaze, Bellarmine
 Context 10: Tyler Hill plus single Roman pot in 7 pieces
 Context 11: Tyler Hill

Appendix 3: Lithics

Catalogue No.	Context	Type	Qualifier 1	Subtype	Earliest Date	Broad Date
1052	2	microlith			M	Mesolithic
1064	1	burin		knife	N	Neolithic
1065	1	scraper	side	notched piece	BA	Bronze age
1068	1	microlith			M	Mesolithic

This is a low number for a Faversham Keyhole Pit and suggests that the earliest settlement layers are buried deeper than 1.3m in this particular location i.e. the natural was not reached.

Appendix 4: Small Finds

SF No.	Context	Simple Name	Material	Weight (g)	Description	Condition	Completeness
1	0	Mount or button	Pewter	1.75	This is a circular item, slightly bowed. There are no indications of this being a small button, although similar in decoration to 18 th century (1720 - 1790) buttons in Bailey 2004 pages 74 & 75. Also, however, very like strap-end in Egan 2005 number 147 page 41 'cast roundel strap-end' which would make it medieval.	Fair	Nearly complete
2	6	Thimble	Copper Alloy	1.19	This is a small, dainty thimble with a domed top and slightly flared base with rim decoration. The size suggests that this is a child's thimble, but it is well made and functional (not a toy). Bailey 1993 p14.	Good	Complete
3	6	Polished bone point	Bone	0.63	Small, highly polished point. Purpose unknown - tine of buckle? From comb?	Good	?
4	10	Mount or small button	Copper Alloy	1.19	Six petalled flower shaped item of uncertain purpose. Similar to item 135 on p40 Egan 2005, which is a dress mount 'sheet sexfoil with domed lobes.' Late 14 th century date suggested.	Fair	Nearly complete
25	7	Button	Copper Alloy	1.7	This button is inscribed F C JACKMAN FAVERSHAM, and is black painted. Frederick Coleman b 1848, ran a gentlemen outfitter in Faversham. He worked from home.	Good	Complete