



## Excavation Report

**Queen Court Farmhouse. Water Lane, Ospringe, Faversham,  
Kent ME13 8UA**



<b>Project Code:</b>	QCF23		
<b>Excavation Code:</b> <b>NGR:</b>	KP192: TR 00175 60458	<b>Excavation Dates:</b>	13/05/2023 - 21/05/2023
<b>Excavation Lead:</b>	Nick Wilkinson	<b>Site Lead:</b>	Mike Tillman
<b>Finds Processing Lead(s):</b>	Pat Reid Maureen Wale	<b>Report Writer:</b>	Mike Tillman
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<b>Contact Email:</b>	archaeology@favershamsociety.org		

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## 1. Introduction.

The work carried out in 2023 at Queen Court was a continuation of work undertaken in both 2021 and 2022, so this current report should be read in conjunction with the previous reports.<sup>1</sup>

Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group (FSARG) first investigated Ospringe in 2008-9.<sup>2</sup> Access to Queen Court – a large medieval house in Water Lane, Ospringe – was not possible until 2021 when new owners welcomed FSARG onto their land.

Prior to the 2021 field seasons the geology and history of the site at Queen Court were investigated and maps assessed. The results of these activities were discussed in the 2021 and 2022 reports and these are briefly summarised below.

Once site access was granted both geo-resistivity and metal detecting surveys were carried out. The results of this work were used in the previous excavations where a total of 5 pits were investigated in the front garden of Queen Court - the pits being numbered KP187, KP188, KP189, KP190 & KP191.<sup>3</sup>

## Part 1: The Setting

### 2. Summary of geography and geology.

Ospringe is a village at the southern edge of the market town of Faversham. The parish is mainly rural and the settlement itself has 2 main sections – one running east west along the A2 and the other running north south along Water Lane, a now dry valley. Queen Court is sited along Water Lane and the area of excavation is based on deposits of brickearth and alluvium.

A fuller account of the geography and geology of the site can be found in the 2021 report.

### 3. Summary of history and map progression.

FSARG's previous work at Ospringe has revealed wide ranging evidence of prehistoric activity. Finds have included a Palaeolithic hand axe, Mesolithic worked flints, Neolithic grooved ware, large quantities of Bronze Age worked flint and flint production site, and Iron Age pottery.<sup>4</sup> Some finds were in situ while others had been redeposited, possibly via the medieval practice of midden scatter. The prehistory at Ospringe was noticeably more shallow than in central Faversham.<sup>5</sup> Only very small amounts of Roman pottery have been found in Ospringe and no evidence of early to mid-Anglo Saxon occupation has been identified. Late Anglo-Saxon to early Norman pottery has been found on just a few sites.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this lack of ground evidence, Queen Court is thought to be the medieval manor of Ospringe as detailed in the Domesday Book.<sup>7</sup> After the Norman Conquest the manor was briefly assigned to William the Conqueror's brother, Bishop Odo, before reverting to the crown and becoming part of the Royal dower packages. It was possibly associated with Queens of England from Isabella of Angouleme (AD1200 - AD1216) to Isabella of Valois (who died in 1356).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Queen Court, Ospringe 2021

<sup>2</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Understanding Ospringe 2008-2009

<sup>3</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Queen Court, Ospringe 2021

<sup>4</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Understanding Ospringe 2008-2009 & Ospringe 2021

<sup>5</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Development of the Town Centre

<sup>6</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Understanding Ospringe 2008-2009, K85A-H Brook Cottages Field, Ospringe

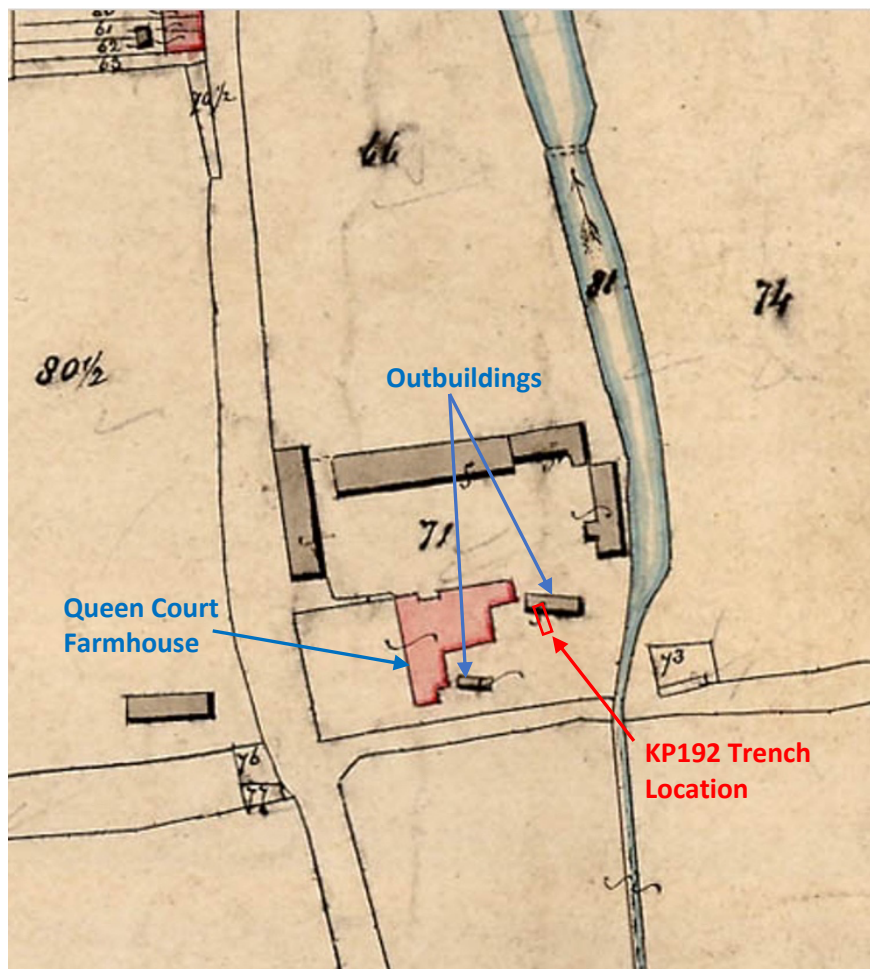
<sup>7</sup> Williams A & G Martin (eds) 1992 *Domesday Book* Penguin Books: London

<sup>8</sup> Michael Frohnsdorff, 2021, *History derived from Documentary Sources* in [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Queen Court, Ospringe 2021 KP187 & KP188 Excavation Report

The Manor was then divided and one half became 'Queene Court Manor' which was passed between the church and Crown until 1549 when it became the property of Thomas Cheyney, a diplomat and state administrator. The current timbered section of the house is thought to date to about AD1500.<sup>9</sup>

During the post medieval (AD1550-1800) and modern periods Queen Court has been essentially a farm house, often as a part of a more extensive estate.<sup>10</sup>

A more in-depth account of the history of the site can be found in KP187 & KP188 report.<sup>11</sup> That report also includes a map progression, featuring maps from 1789 onwards. The 1840 tithe map (**Fig 1**) is the earliest map to show 2 outbuildings to the east of the farmhouse, the larger of the 2 forming part of this investigation.



**Fig 1: 1840 Tithe May. The outbuildings and the trench location.**

<sup>9</sup> John Owen, 2021, *Post medieval and modern* in [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Queen Court, Ospringe 2021 KP187 & KP188 Excavation Report

<sup>10</sup> John Owen, 2021, *Post medieval and modern* in [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Queen Court, Ospringe 2021 KP187 & KP188 Excavation Report

<sup>11</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) Excavations, Queen Court, Ospringe 2021 KP187 & KP188 Excavation Report

#### 4. Research Questions.

The original project at Queen Court was designed to investigate the following questions:

- i. Were manor complexes on the site prior to the current building (i.e. the period AD1080-1500)?
- ii. Were any Anglo-Saxon structures (i.e. prior to 1080) present on this site? Could this be the Manor of Ospringe as listed in the Domesday Book?
- iii. Are there signs of the wealth of Queen Court varying during it's time under royal ownership compared with earlier or later years?
- iv. Is there any evidence of varying farming or land use over the long history of Queen Court?
- v. Is there any evidence of Roman activity on this site?
- vi. Is there any evidence of prehistoric activity on this site?

The work carried out in 2021 raised some additional questions, but conclusions were reached for these following the 2022 work.

It was decided that there could be no further information gained from any more excavations at the front of the property, so our attention moved to rear.

## Part 2: The Excavation

#### 5. The location of KP192.



Fig 2. The location of the trench KP192

**Fig 2** shows a modern aerial view, overlaid with the geo-resistivity survey. The dotted blue lines indicate previous buildings shown on the 1840 tithe map, and the green shows the water course of the Westbrook. KP192 (in red) was set out on a north-south alignment and positioned to capture both the wall of one of the previous outbuildings, and the contrast in ground conditions between the dry soil (light) and the wetter conditions (darker).

## 6. The procedure.

KP192 was 4m x 0.75m in size, its locations being recorded by measuring to fixed reference points on the main house. Turf was carefully cut, set aside and watered throughout. The trench was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which were fully recorded. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.8m. Excavated soil was sieved meticulously. The spoil bags were checked regularly using a metal detector. Datable or particularly interesting finds were individually recorded. Finally, the trench was backfilled, the turf replaced and the whole area watered.

Standard methodology is followed when notating contexts in this report, with each context being numbered and being contained within brackets e.g. [01]. Small Finds are notated using initials and number e.g., SF34.

## 7. The Excavation.

Contextually, KP192 was very straightforward with no evidence of cuts, pits or postholes.

With the turf (context [01]) removed, the upper context [02] was very familiar mid-brown, fine grained garden topsoil with inclusions of flint, mortar and plaster, tile, iron, brick, coal & clinker, shell, together with a small amount (8 pieces) of late post-medieval (c. 1800 onwards) pottery. The context extended down to a maximum depth of 18cm.

Below this layer, there was a significant colour change to a more orange hue [03] (see **Fig 3**). This very mixed layer contained a high proportion of flints, including 117 worked (including waste shatter etc), mortar and plaster, CBM (brick and tile), a large piece of tarmac, with smaller quantities of coal, glass, shell and iron. Included in the finds were modern items such as a battery electrode, elastic band and other plastic. The 78 pieces of pottery consisted of Tyler Hill, Shelly ware, and late post-medieval redware, spanning some 1,400 years. All but one small find was found in this context which included a wooden knife handle, tiny glass (or ceramic) bead, and several iron objects almost certainly associated with farm machinery (see **Appendix 3**).

The full extent of [03] was established by inserting 75cm wide slots at the north and south ends of the trench and excavating down until a context change was apparent. Once found, the remaining soil between the slots was removed to fully expose the new layer [04] at a depth of 71cm. This was a hard, compacted chalk layer. It extended across the whole area of the trench (see **Fig 4**) down to a maximum depth of 97cm – the full extent being established by digging a further 2 investigation slots (as with the previous context).

The majority of the inclusions consisted of building materials such as brick and tile, mortar and plaster, slate, but also coal and clinker, with much less flint, iron and just 4 pieces of pottery. A thin brown tile with mortar still attached was recorded as the final small find SF6.



**Fig 3: Shows context [03] directly beneath the topsoil.**



**Fig 4: The very clear chalk layer [04].**

Using the same method as before, two investigation slots of approximately 0.75m wide were excavated to determine the depth of the chalk. After a few more centimetres of digging, large bricks started to appear (see **Figs 5 & 6**), and as the excavation continued, a drainage pipe was also revealed; the alignment of which corresponded to the wall line of the previous outbuilding.



**Fig 5: Large bricks towards the north end of the trench.**



**Fig 6: (Left) South-looking view showing both slots.**



**Fig 7: (Top) Brick samples from [05], and (Bottom) Bricks from [06].**

The area between the 2 slots was then removed, exposing the next context [05] that consisted of some 35kg of building material, predominantly made up of bricks (see **Fig 7**), together with slate and tile with flints of all sizes. Just 4 small pieces of pottery (redware) were found, with very few other inclusions. This layer was a shallow depth of some 20cm.

Beneath the rubble was a further compacted 10cm chalk layer [06]. Contained in the chalk was quantities of brick (**Fig 7**), with small amounts of slate, tile, glass, coal and clinker.

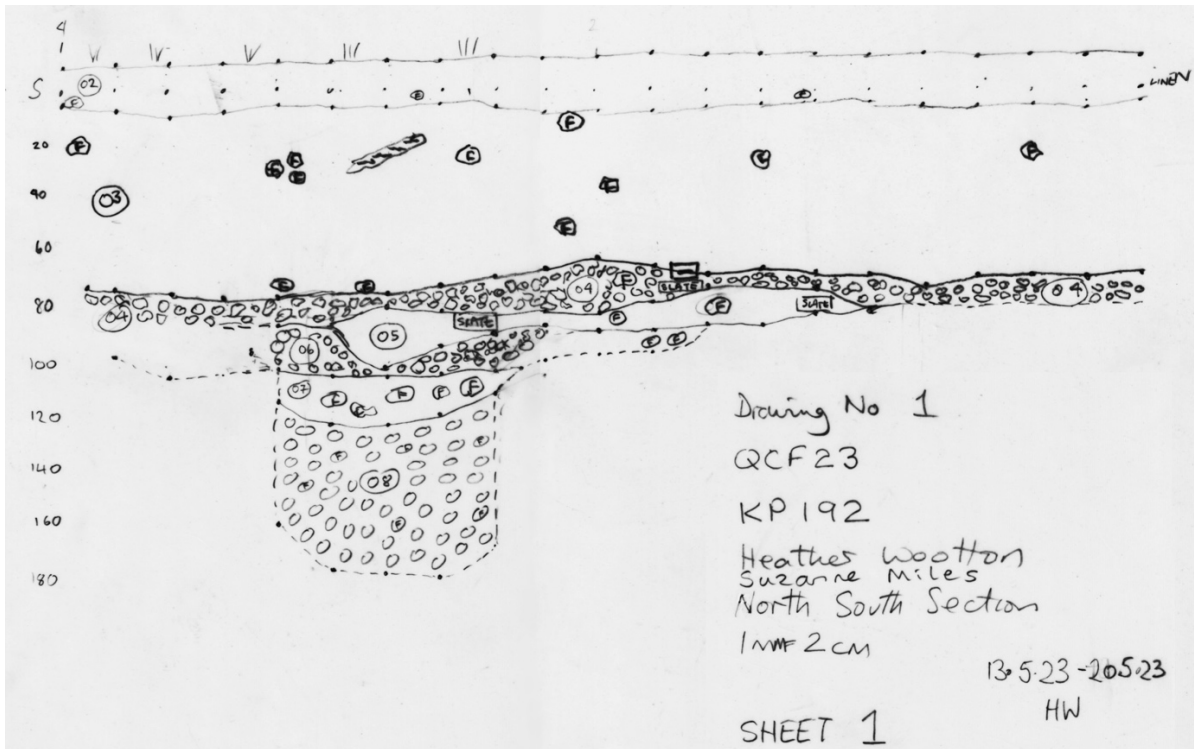
Without wanting to disturb the drainage pipe, excavation was confined to the south end of the trench. A 1m wide slot was dug 60cm from the south end of the trench. Beneath [06] was a 15-20cm layer of flints [07] ranging in size from small to large in a dark grey soil (see **Fig 8**). Between the flints were small quantities of gravel. Of the flint, 4 pieces showed signs of working, and 6 were heat stressed. There were also 6 small pieces of brick, and 2 pieces of sandy plaster.



**Fig 8: The surface of the flint layer [07].**



As the excavation continued, fewer large flints and more gravel defined context [08]. Because of the restricted access, the material to the south of the slot (contexts [05], [06] and [07]) was removed. At a depth of nearly 2m there was still no change, but this was the extent of our excavation. Mixed in with the flints was brick and tile, 12 pieces of pottery – including 3 pieces of Staffordshire-type slipware ‘Bakewell tart’ (mid 17<sup>th</sup> – mid 18<sup>th</sup> C), a nail, tooth and oyster shell. **Fig 9** is a north-south section drawing, and **Fig 10** shows the limit of the complete excavation.



**Fig 9: North – south sectional drawing.**



**Fig 10: The limit of the excavation was reached at just under 2m.**

## **8. Interpretation.**

Unfortunately, the excavation of KP192 did not provide any additional information to answer the 6 original research questions posed in 2021. However, the edge of the outbuilding was confirmed, with a drainage pipe running parallel to the wall line. The first 80cm of soil consisted of topsoil and highly disturbed make-up, suggesting that there has been considerable remodelling of the rear garden over the years.

The first compacted chalk surface ([04]) at a depth of 71cm that included brick, slate and to a lesser degree tile, suggests that the outbuilding had at least a brick foundation with a possible slate roof. Most of the bricks were of the 'frogged' variety suggesting a date no earlier than late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

## **9. Summary.**

From the dateable materials recovered during excavation, all the evidence points to activity confined to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

## **10. Acknowledgements.**

It has been a great pleasure for FSARG to work at such a historic property, and we'd like to thank the owners Chris and Joh for hosting our excavations over the last 3 seasons.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century iron spur discovered in KP188 (2021) is a rare survivor of its type, and now that the professional conservation has been completed, it will be put on display in our local museums for all to see.

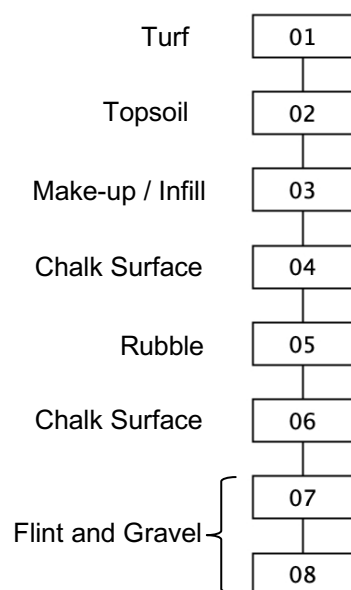
Finally, a huge thanks to everybody who volunteers with FSARG. Without their dedication, hard work, and giving up their valuable time, we would not be able to continue to add to the history of our town.

**Mike Tillman**  
**November 2023**

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<sup>12</sup> Gerard Lynch, 2007, *The History of Gauged Brickwork: Conservation, Repair and Modern Application (Routledge Series in Conservation and Museology)*

## Appendix 1: KP192 Harris Matrix



## Appendix 2: Pottery Table

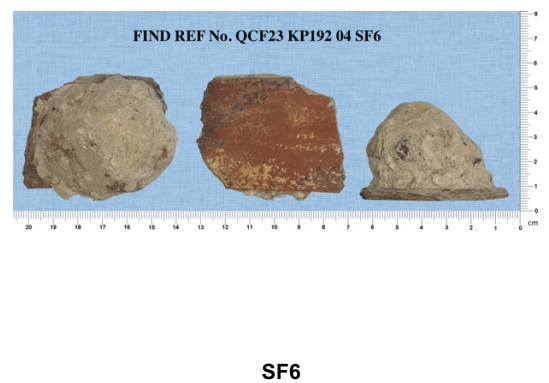
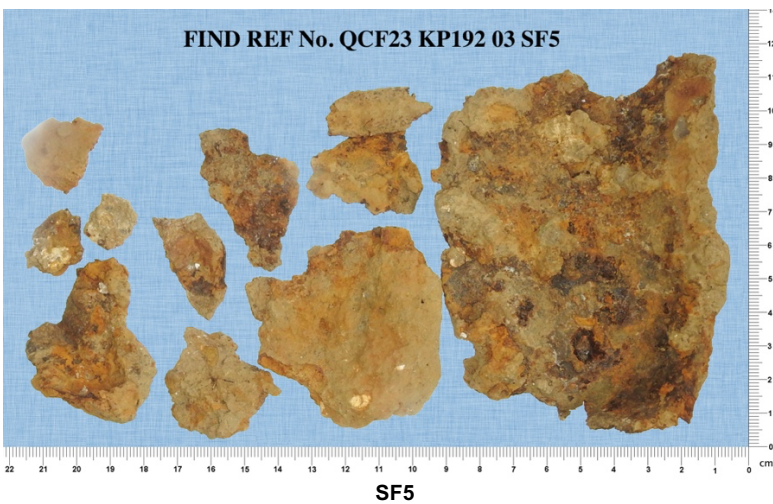
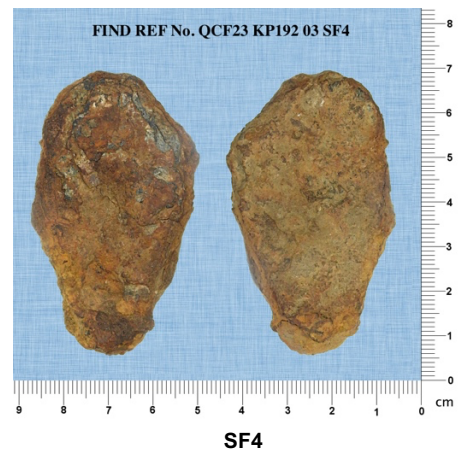
KP192													
Context	Pre	Ro	EMS	MS	LS	EM	M	LM	PM	PM/LPM/RED	LPM	Unident	Totals by Context (g)
02										12			12
03													262
04													39
05										64			64
06													0
07													0
08													36
<b>Totals by Chronology</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	76	0	0	413

### Key to tables

<b>Pre</b>	Prehistory	Up to AD43	<b>LM</b>	Late Medieval	AD1400 - 1550
<b>Ro</b>	Roman colonisation	AD43 – AD410	<b>PM</b>	Post Medieval	AD1550 - 1800
<b>EMS</b>	Early-Mid Anglo-Saxon	AD410 - 700	<b>RED</b>	Redware (Difficult to date pottery type)	AD1600 - 1900
<b>MS</b>	Mid Anglo-Saxon	AD700 – 850	<b>LPM</b>	Late Post Medieval	AD1800 - Present
<b>LS</b>	Late Saxon	AD850 – 1050	<b>Uni</b>	Unidentifiable	
<b>EM</b>	Early Medieval	AD1050 - 1225			
<b>M</b>	Medieval	AD1225 - 1400			

## Appendix 3: Small Finds

### KP192 Small Finds



#### A brief description of KP192 Small Finds

<b>SF1</b>	Wooden knife handle with rivetted tang	<b>SF4</b>	Teardrop-shaped iron object
<b>SF2</b>	Small ceramic or glass bead	<b>SF5</b>	Iron sheet fragments (from a container)
<b>SF3</b>	Square iron object (possibly a spacer)	<b>SF6</b>	Mortar with thin brown tile still attached