

# Searching for the Kings Manor: HSX17

## 1. Starting point

One of the best-known pieces of the Faversham story is a quote from a charter from King Coenwulf in AD811 which mentions the 'King's little town of Febresham'<sup>1</sup>. This is the first known written mention of Faversham and gives a context which is still proudly represented in the Faversham Town coat of arms with its three couchant royal lions. Faversham is still the King's town in the Domesday book, listed as a royal manor<sup>2</sup>. Yet it has also become clear from archaeological sources that Faversham was more than just a King's manor: it was very probably a centre for precious metal working and glass making in the earlier Saxon times<sup>3</sup>. The market mentioned in Domesday was also probably part of this earlier heritage, as was the link with the sea. This points to the possible earlier existence, maybe extending up to the beginning of the High Medieval period, of two parts to the town. One was down by the Westbrook where the craftsmen, merchants, and seamen lived and the other, with the royal manor and its outbuildings, was higher up on the spur of land that overlooks the Creek.

FSARG's first project in 2005-7 was called 'Hunt the Saxons' and concentrated for two years on the Tanners Street area, moving up onto higher ground in the third year. We did indeed find some evidence for mid Saxon settlement in Tanners Street and quite a lot for the mid medieval period and plenty for the High Medieval period<sup>4</sup>. Evidence for the early glass-houses and the metal working sites, however, remained elusive.

Even at that stage, though, we suspected that the early royal manor was up on the higher ground. This was based on two incontrovertible facts. One was the location of the parish church, nowadays called St Mary of Charity but known in the medieval period as Our Lady of Faversham<sup>5</sup>. The other was that most mundane of Saxon objects, a clay loom weight found on the bomb site on the corner of Newton Road and East Street that was cleared in 1953 to build the Post Office<sup>6</sup>.

Both finds point to Saxon settlement in this upper part of the modern town. The loom weight indicates domestic settlement, women engaged in everyday household tasks. The location of Our Lady of Faversham is significant because the great majority of parish churches in this country started out as manor chapel: you only have to look at the Faversham hundred to see that every single church is next to a big manor-farm which is often called -Court or -Lodge, the mark of an early manor site.

In 2007, we used the season to explore a variety of sites in the Abbey Street area around the church using our keyhole excavation techniques, still hunting Saxons. Although these investigations produced lots of medieval pottery and in the Abbey Place area a lot of the distinctive shelly ware that indicates 11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century mid-medieval activity, we did not find any earlier Saxon evidence. The most productive pits, which also yielded some Roman items, were two dug at the rear of 19 and 17 East Street. This was the closest we could get to the loom weight find spot. The reports on these two pits, KP36 and 37, are vital reading on our website if you are going to be involved in the excavations this year (summer 2017).

The last element in this project plan comes from a very important find from 2016. The aim of 2016's work was to link our overall investigation of Faversham back down to the town centre from Preston. This was achieved by focussing mainly on Newton Road, a relatively new addition to the Faversham town layout (around 1890-ish) that runs parallel to Preston Street, one of Faversham's oldest roads. In the garden of 20 Newton Road, next to Gatefield Lane, which is yet another ancient routeway, was found a complex of levels and features, the lowest of which was a chalk floor with two circular holes opening onto voids. From this chalk floor level came a substantial piece of Ipswich ware. All this had to be left to backfilling as time had run out.

Ipswich ware does not look particularly impressive, but it is a key indicator type of mid Saxon pottery, made around AD750. After the Romano British culture collapsed, pottery reverted to being hand-made for around 300 years. Ipswich ware, rough though it looks, was bulk made in workshops in Ipswich on a slow wheel and distributed across East Anglia and (more rarely) North Kent – there have been finds on Sheppey. This

centralised manufacture and distribution of Ipswich ware shows a return to a trade network: the 'Dark Ages' were ending.

## **2. The Project HSX17**

The main aim of this project is to locate the royal manor complex of mid Saxon and Saxo-Norman times. The focus in 2007 was to look north of the parish church but this year the area south of the church, up to around Gatefield Lane, will be the focus of attention. This will cover the rectangle enclosed by East St/ Recreation Road/ Gatefield Lane (including adjacent to the south)/ Preston St. The corresponding rectangle to the north enclosed by East Street/ Middle Row-Court St / Church St then across east to Cooks Ditch/ south to Whitstable Road. This is quite a large area and investigating it thoroughly is likely to take 2-3 seasons.

## **3. Background**

### **a) Location.**

The location is shown in Fig 1. It ranges from what is considered the heart of the town nowadays across to what was beyond the edge of the town until the mid-19th century. Map 1a shows the area in 1774. The familiar town centre road layout is instantly recognisable, with the marketplace in the upper left quadrant and East Street-Whitstable road running to the east. The built-up area consists of a single row of properties lining the streets in the centre of town. Behind them are gardens, then orchard (round trees) and hop fields (pointy). The shooting meadow to the east of the Church is very distinctive. Gatefield Lane runs off in the general direction of Macknades.

In map 1b, St Marys Road, houses have been built but Newton Road, although laid out, is un-named with no houses yet. Map 1c in 1907 shows the study area. It is far more cramped and difficult to read, but the general road pattern, including Gatefield Lane, is still clear. Note that Crescent Road is, of course, absent – it is a post-World War 2 development. The red dotted line shows the approximate boundary of the area being investigated.



Fig 1a: 1774 map from Jacobs



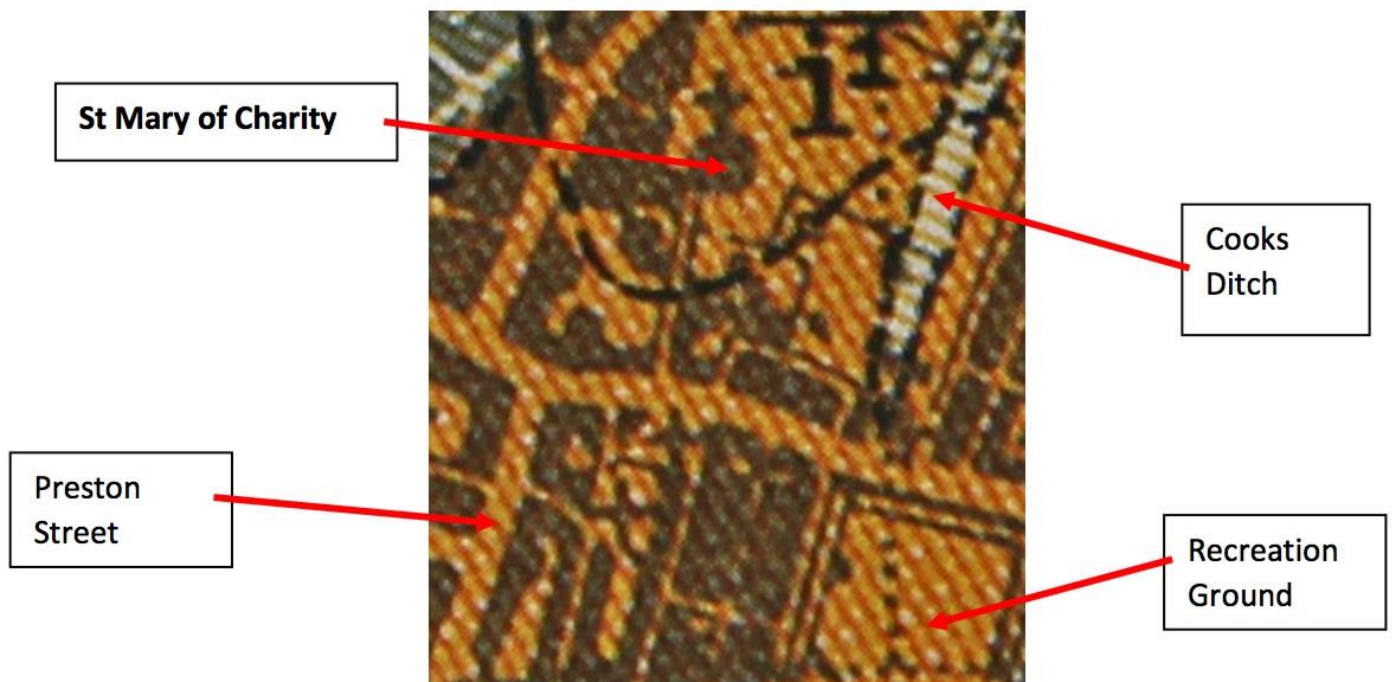
Fig 1b: 1877 OS map



Fig 1c: 1907 OS map

**b) Geology and physical geography**

**Yellow-orange:** Head Brickearth. **Pale Cream:** alluvium. **Pale Green:** upper chalk.



## Fig 2: The Geology of the study area

Fig 2<sup>7</sup> shows the geology of the defined area, which slopes gently downwards to the north. Chalk underlies a continuous sheet of Head Brickearth which is interrupted only by a streak of alluvium along the valley of the Cooks Ditch. At present the Cooks Ditch rises at a muddy spring just to the west of Cyprus Road but there is reason to believe that in earlier times it rose to the north of the Recreation ground near St Catherines Church<sup>8</sup>.

## c) Previous archaeology in this area

Because the western part of this area is the centre of this historic town, for conservation reasons very little commercial work has been carried out. Brief details of the main investigations (all very small scale) over the last twenty-five years under PPG16 are shown in Fig 3. The eastern part of the study area has barely been touched by archaeology. Although the areas to the north (Abbey Fields) and the east (EKP site) have been stripped of archaeology by the brick industry, the recreation ground (created in 1862) and the areas covered by the school playing fields have not, as far as we know, been 'dug off' so their archaeology is still there. The FSARG investigation sites are KPs 36 and 37 in East Street and reports are available on the FSARG website [www.community-archaeology.org.uk](http://www.community-archaeology.org.uk). The sites in Preston Street and Church Road are part of the HSX17 project.

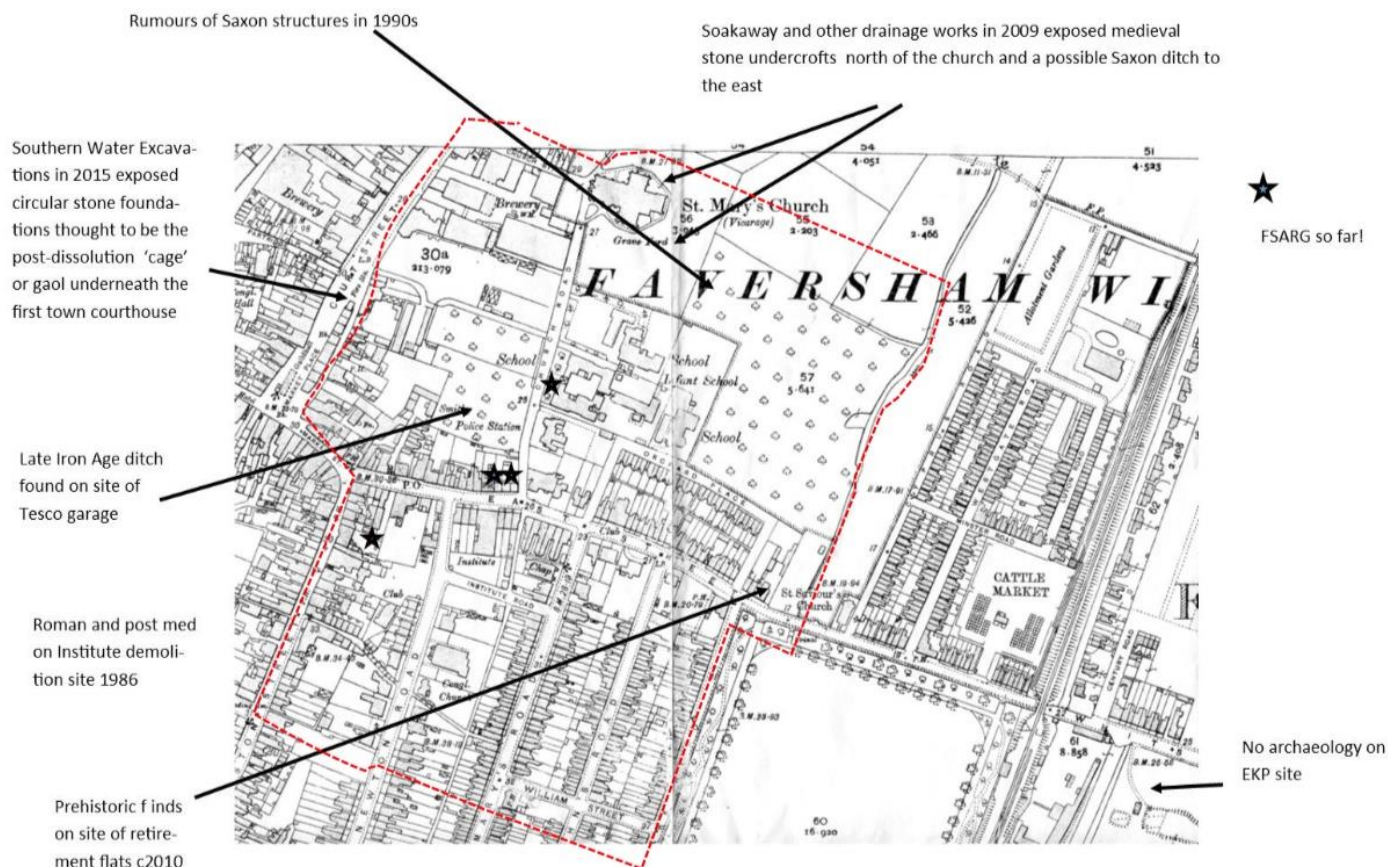
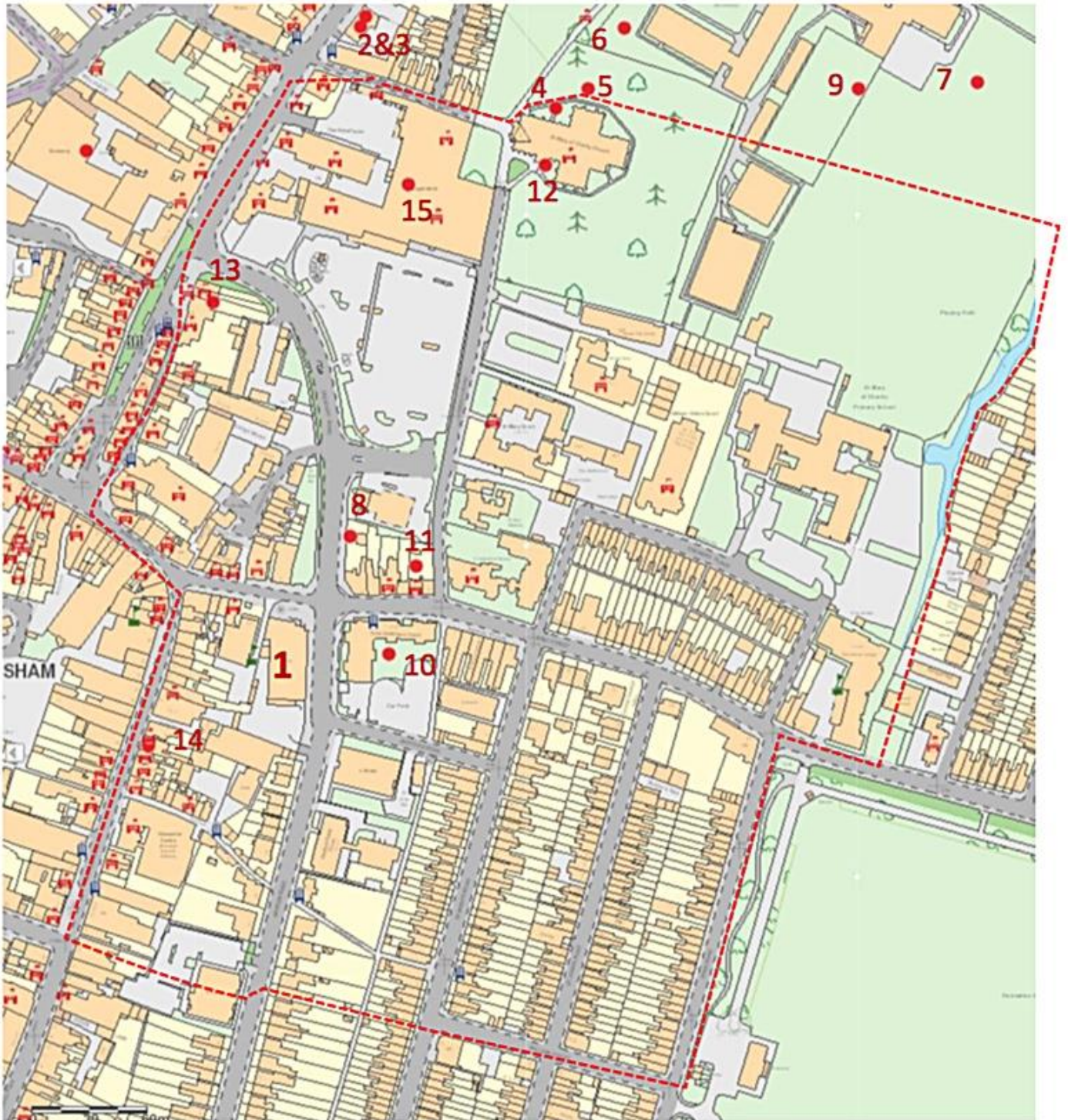


Fig 3: Commercial Archaeological Investigations in Faversham

## d) HER listings in the study area

(See: <http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.HeritageMaps.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx>)

The following sites and finds are shown on the Map in Fig 4.



**Fig 4 Find Spots MAP from the HER**

#### **e) Other sources of archaeological information**

St Marys, unsurprisingly for such a splendid, historic, and unusual church, has attracted a lot of attention over the years. H A James' Faversham Paper has much useful basic information, although his dating of the high Medieval rebuild is suspect<sup>9</sup>. The recent funded Built to Inspire project with accompanying website, although excellent on the antiquities publications on later periods<sup>10</sup>, does seem to continue to propagate the misinterpretation of an AD636 Document of Bishop Honorius in which the Latin term for diocesan boundaries is mistranslated as meaning parishes<sup>11</sup>: parishes as we know them are not found until the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and certainly not at only forty years after the arrival of St Augustine. Favershamites down the road will go on burying their dead in pagan glory, with jewels and swords, for another 80 or so years.

This is the area of uncertainty about Faversham's fascinating past that FSARG is trying to clarify in 2017-8.

## **f) Summary**

This, then, is an area with great potential and is very under researched. It will without doubt yield finds and features from all periods. At the moment, knowledge and understanding of this part of town is considerable but very scrappy and fragmentary. Let us hope that FSARG can link it together and tell the story of the 'Kings little town'.

## **4) Strategies for 2017**

**a)** The field work must, of course, be preceded by considerable desk top work involving multiple resources and this document shows the first stages of this. At this point, tentative identification has been made of sites which could yield important answers.

### **Field dates 2017**

#### **i) Easter season: Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April - Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April:**

- Consolidation of finds from last year.
- Survey of the newly revealed millstones from the gunpowder works at Stonebridge Allotments. (Not related to the main project for this year).
- Resistivity survey of the QE School Field.
- Research into maps and other documents relating to this year's project
- Other preparation for the season

#### **ii) Early summer season: Saturday May 27<sup>th</sup> – Sunday June 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Excavations at

- Church Road in the front garden of St Marys Court
- At the rear of 4A Preston Street (Furlongs micro pub)
- At Preston Vicarage (Related to previous years project)

#### **iii) Main summer season: Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July – Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July:**

Many other sites are potentially available and it is hoped that in future years these may be investigated. We wish to continue to investigate the garden of Newton Lodge that revealed some surfaces and post holes of interest but is not available this year.



The primary sites for investigation this summer are

- Queen Elizabeth School Playing Field, the initial resistivity survey results for this are now in the appendix to this document.
- Any open spaces or gardens in Middle Row or the part of Court Street up to Crescent Road
- The Preston Street side of Newton Road between Gatefield Lane and the Post Office

#### **iv) Late Summer Season Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September to Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September**

Jacobs Yard off Preston Street. This is a small, paved area adjacent to The Yard Café, we will have to lift the paving. This dig will be 11<sup>th</sup> Sept to 14<sup>th</sup> Sept because in the summer the area is used for seating by the café.

#### **b) Community Events 2017**

- We will have a stall at the Oare Gunpowder Works for the Artists in the Woods event on June 18<sup>th</sup>. This will include a display of recent activities.
- We will not have a stall at the Nautical Festival this year 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> July because it is in the middle of the digging season and we don't have enough people to support it.
- We may have a stall showing recent investigations at the Faversham Food Festival on the weekend starting the 16<sup>th</sup> of September. This depends on the availability of people who may also be supporting the recording of finds at the Metal Detector Rally on the Lees Court Estate on the same weekend.
- Support for the Lees Court Metal Detecting Rally 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September (Not related to the current years project) will be provided if the KAS will take responsibility for the recording and write up of the findings. Other local groups may be asked to support as well.

#### **c) Finds Processing**

Post excavation finds work will continue from the early summer season until the autumn.

#### **d) Publication and dissemination**

Preliminary Findings will be presented at the Evaluation and Planning meeting

Reports will be published online using the FSARG website and the Kent County Council Historic Environment Record. Decisions about summary print publication will be taken after the investigations are complete and have been evaluated. Paper copies of reports will be given to householders as soon as they are available.

## **e) Funding**

This project is not likely to require equipment, specialist knowledge or facilities beyond those already possessed by FSARG, so no further capital expenditure will be needed. Consumables and other incidental expenses will be covered (as usual) by private donation. Online publication is free, given that our website is privately funded: funding for any other form of publication will be considered when decisions about this are taken in the autumn.

## **Signature**

**Dr Patricia Reid/ John Clarkstone**

**Date 14/07/2017**

<sup>1</sup> Ward, G 1934 'The topography of some Saxon Charters relating to Faversham'. Arch. Cant. 46

<sup>2</sup> Williams & Martin (eds) 1992 Domesday Book, Penguin Edition: London

<sup>3</sup> Evison V 1982 'Anglo Saxon Claw beakers' Archaeologia 107

<sup>4</sup> FSARG website <http://www.community-archaeology.org.uk/> Hunt the Saxons Investigation

<sup>5</sup> See Hasted Vol 6 1797 p362 amongst other references. Brewer: Canterbury

<sup>6</sup> KCC HER: TR06 SW33

<sup>7</sup> Extract from British Geological Survey 1:50000 Series Solid and Drift England and Wales Sheet 273 Faversham

<sup>8</sup> FSARG website. Report on Preston Farm. Fig 1 of flood projection, Fig 2 early photograph of St Catherines.

<sup>9</sup> H A James. 1990 Faversham Parish Church: a history and guide. Faversham paper No 33

<sup>10</sup> Built to Inspire Project, various manifestations

<sup>11</sup> See Hasted 1797 Vol 1 for a clear correction to this common mistake

## Appendix A

### Geophysics (Resistivity) Results for QE School Field

In the early summer season, a resistivity survey was undertaken of part of the QE field. The survey was of an 80m by 60m area at 1m intervals over a period of 3 days. Fig 5a shows the area surveyed superimposed approximately on the 2013 aerial photo and Fig 5b on the 1960 aerial photo. The survey area was chosen so that identifiable feature (i.e. The field boundary on the 1960 photograph, the cricket practice strip and the jumping pit) were included – so that the results could be readily aligned.

Fig 6a shows the results from the resistivity survey and Figs 6b, 6c and 6d give a possible interpretation of the features.

### Observations

There are several features visible

- a)** The land drains and the known ditch (probably Victorian as not on Jacobs but on 1886 1:500 – 10ft to the mile) show up as light colour which is dry. The ditch may be there for the land drains. The field boundaries on the 1960s aerial photo are visible. These may be some of the boundaries shown on the Jacobs Map.
- b)** There are other light line features which may be boundaries or walls but don't line up with known features on early aerial photos. The line features that line up with aerial photos, maps or observation of the ground are shown solid, others as dotted.
- c)** There is a dark area on the upper middle left grid, which is about 10m across and appears to be rectangular. It may represent an old enclosure or less plausibly a large building. However, it could also be a consequence of use of the playing field as a sports pitch.



Fig 5a 2013 Aerial Photo with survey area shown (Approximate)



Fig 5b 1960 Aerial Photo with survey area shown (approximate)

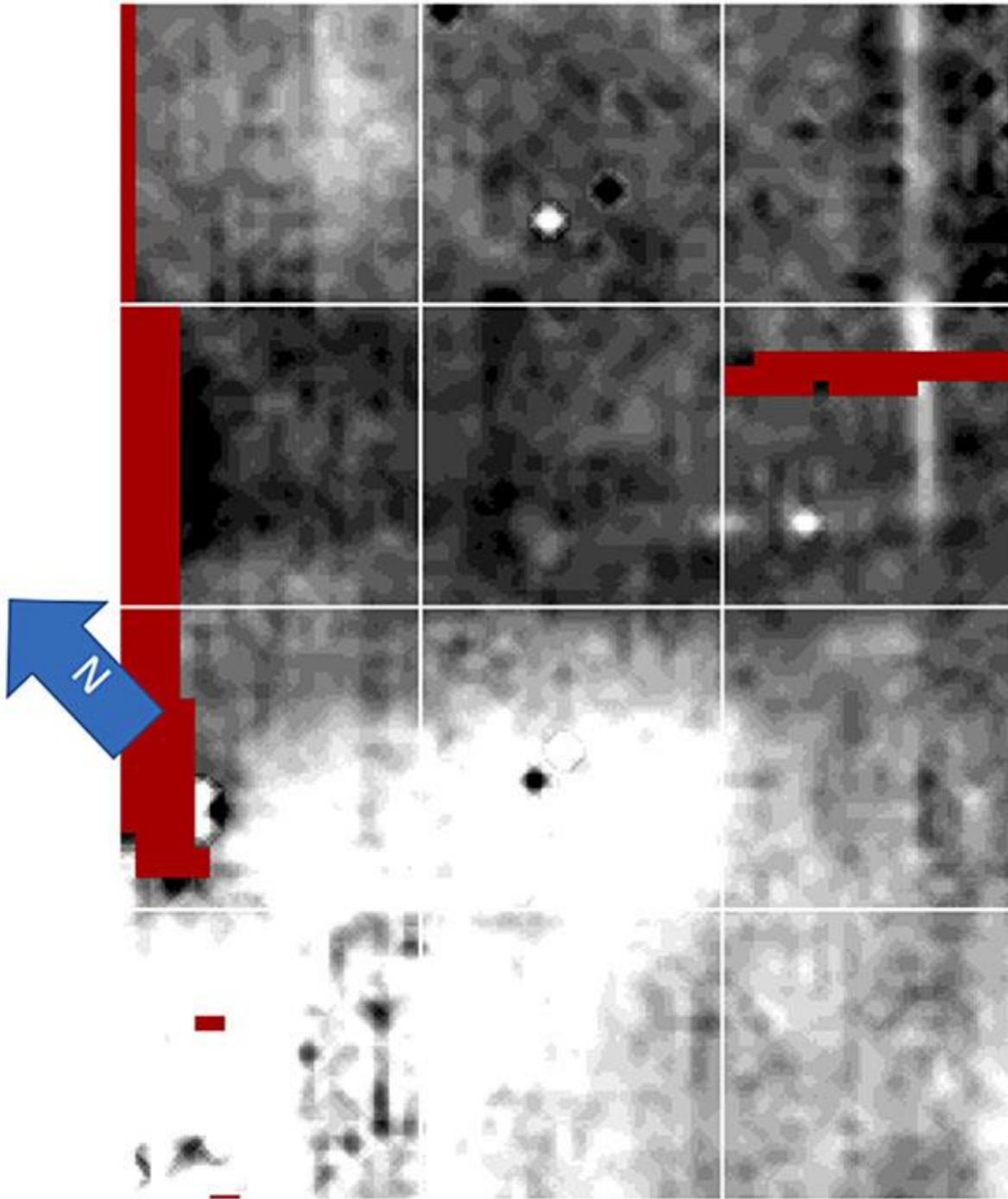


Fig 6a Resistivity Survey

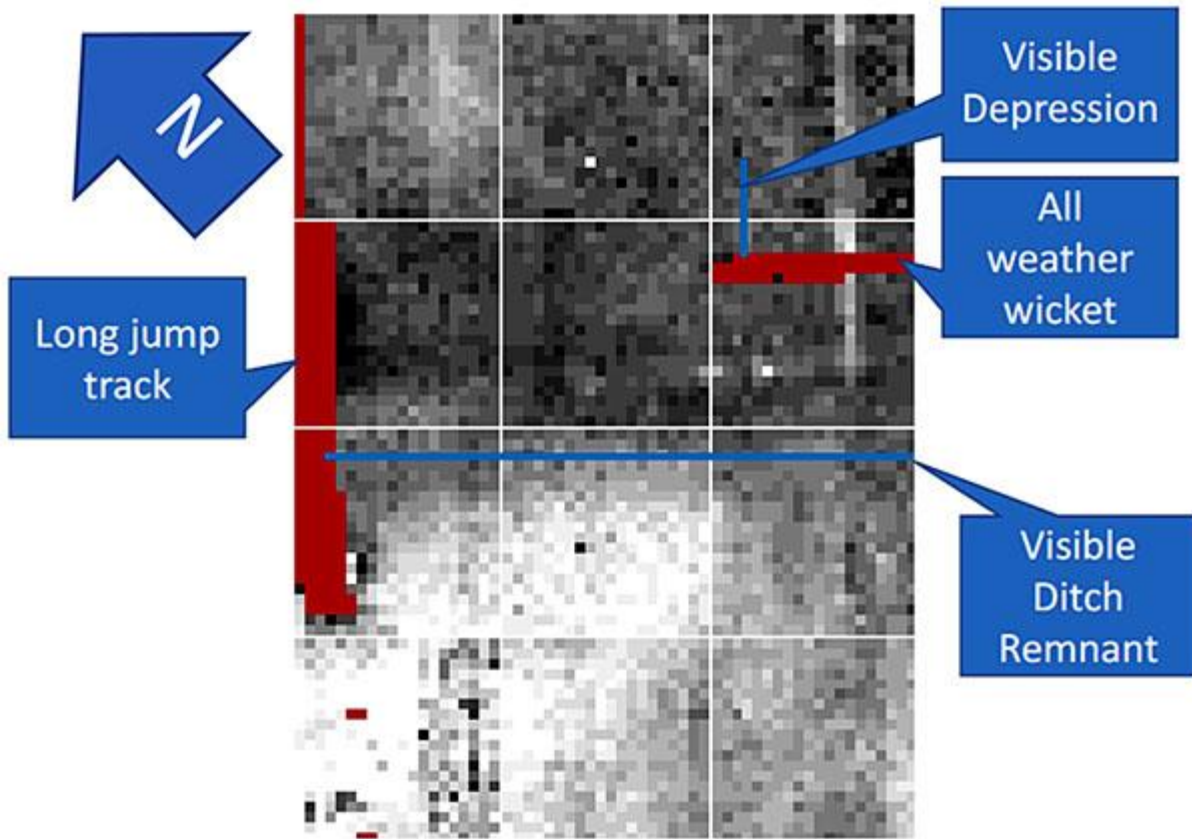


Fig 6b Resistivity Survey orientation features

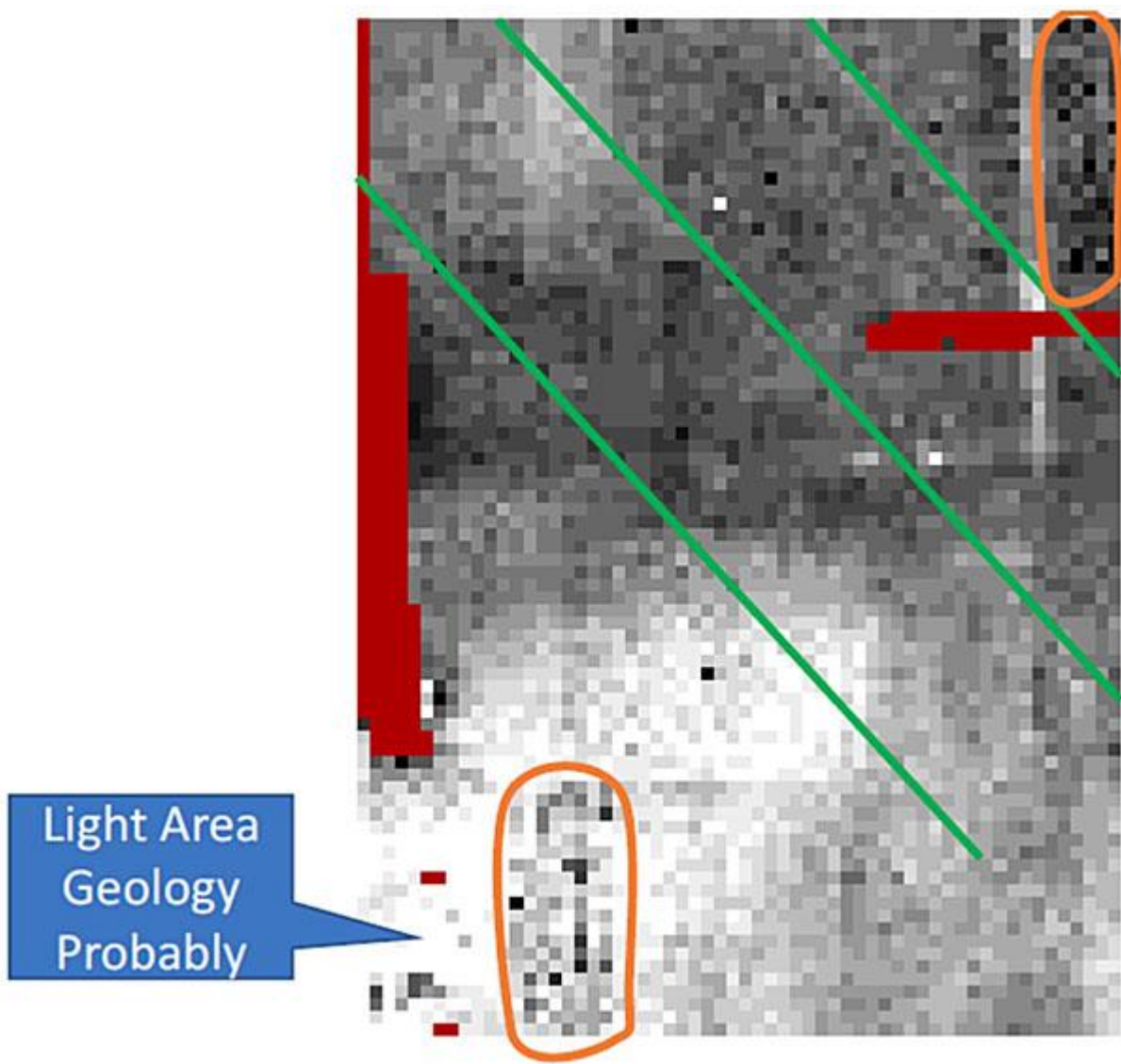


Fig 6c Resistivity Survey showing Land Drains, Geology and Misreading

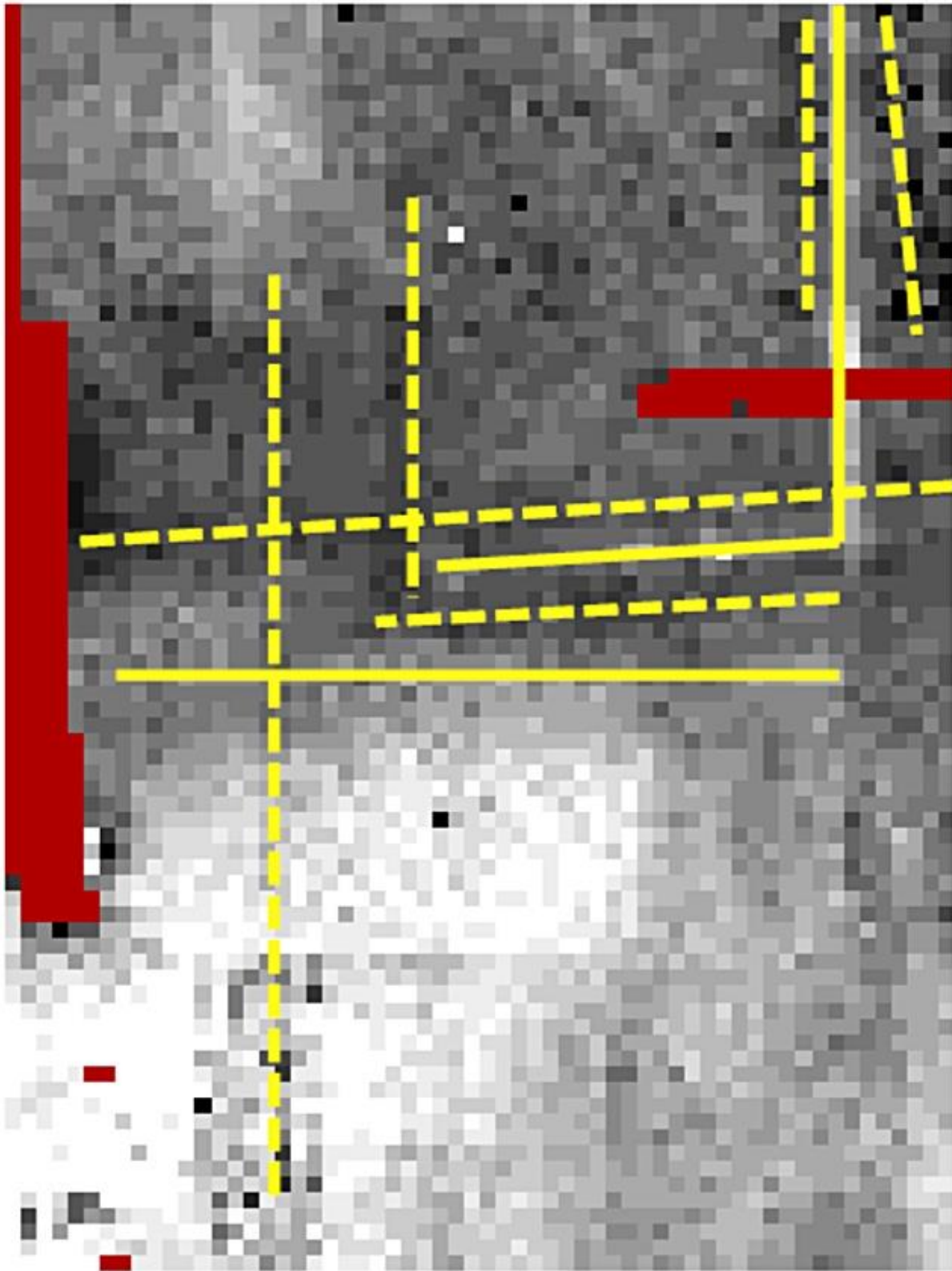


Fig 6d Resistivity Survey Showing line features of interest