



# **Thoughts on the archaeology of the Upper Basin, Faversham Creek**

**Dr Patricia Reid  
Community Archaeologist for the Faversham Society**



View across Stonebridge Pond looking south east across Flood Lane, in 2007

## Thoughts on the archaeology of the Upper Basin, Faversham Creek

### Introduction

This part of Faversham is bounded to the south by the north side of West Street (numbers 64 to 78), to the west by the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond, in the north by Faversham Creek into which the Brook and Pond feed and to the east ultimately by North Lane. (Fig 1). It is nowadays a quiet and attractive area, with the Flood Lane Recreation Area particularly idyllic. Yet this has not always been the case, as this paper will show.

A number of recently available sources have been drawn upon to build up the narrative of this zone. These include:

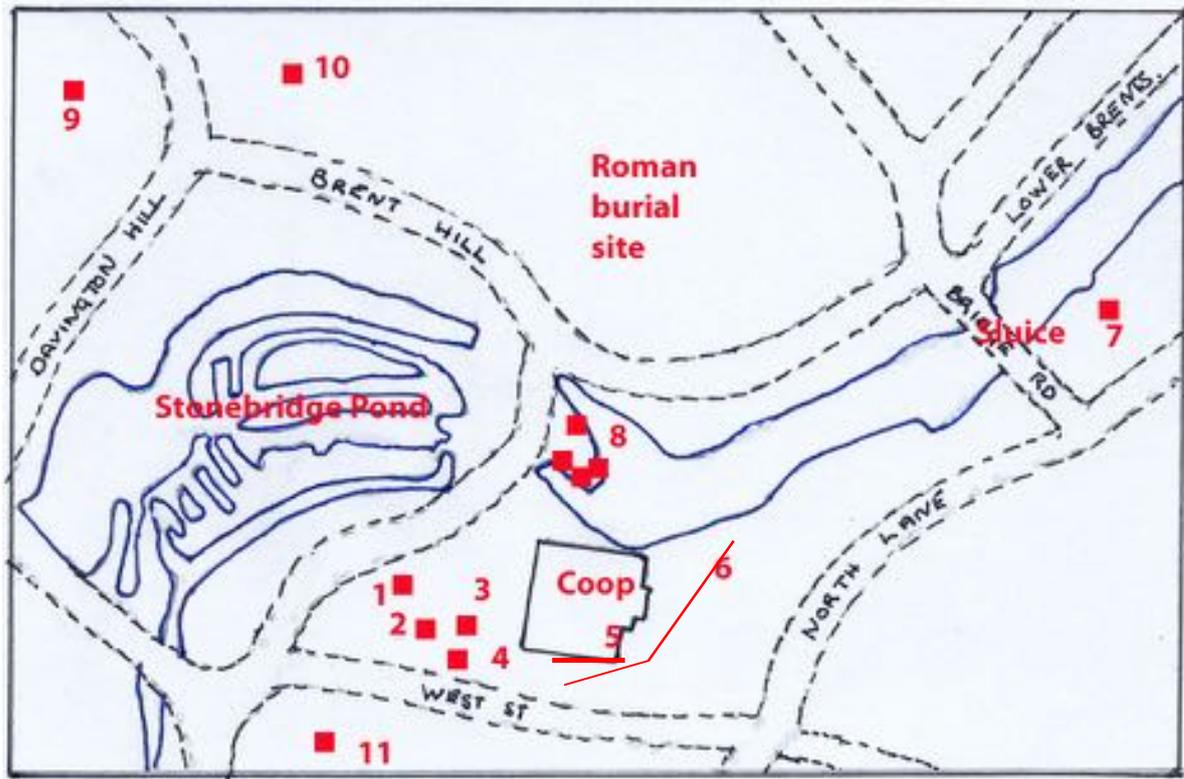
- Four test pits, a geo-resistivity survey and a surveyed profile carried out as part of a Community Archaeology project *Hunt the Saxons* in 2005/6<sup>i</sup>
- An archaeological evaluation carried out in 1991 after the demolition of the Gas Works and before the building of a Coop superstore on the site<sup>ii</sup>
- An archaeological evaluation carried out at nearby Ordnance Wharf in 2005<sup>iii</sup>:
- A hydrographic study of Faversham Creek navigation, carried out in 2005<sup>iv</sup>
- A recently published documentary study of Faversham as a port in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>v</sup>

Fig 1 shows the locations of the various archaeological investigations.

The paper also draws upon the large archive of maps and photographs at the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre in Faversham, on such stalwarts as Swaine's 1969 survey of historic buildings in Faversham<sup>vi</sup>, the knowledge of experts in Faversham history and local residents with long memories. Philp's published account of the archaeology revealed in the sewage shaft sunk near TS Hazard in 1965<sup>vii</sup> is also very relevant.

Although this short paper will raise as many questions as it answers, it should form a useful contribution to any decision making about the future of this odd little area, which is already under pressure from a new set of development issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see last part *Things to Come* )

Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs have been taken by Jim Reid of FSARG. Any use of these or other material from this paper should be credited to the Faversham Society.



**Fig 1: Excavations in the study area**

**Key**

- Hunt the Saxons Test Pits: 1: TP24 2: TP22 3: TP23B 4: TP23A 11: TP9  
 Gas Works evaluation: 5: South Section 6: line of main trench along which 8 sections were recorded  
 Sewage Shaft: 7  
 Ordnance Wharf evaluation trenches: 8  
 Davington Priory: 9  
 Davington Barn evaluation: 10  
 Roman burial site (found in 1770) shown on map.  
 Geo resistivity survey area

## 1) **Main research issues**

The main topics are as follows

### **a) Where was the head of the tide in the past and how and why has this changed over time?**

Flood Lane lies at the present head of the tide in Faversham creek, with the waters of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond held back by sluices (Fig 1). No systematic research has been done on the tidal situation in pre-sluice times. Due to post glacial subsidence in SE England, sea level is higher than, say, 2000 years ago<sup>viii</sup> and one would expect tides to penetrate further inland nowadays than in the past. Downstream, however, considerable silting has taken place, along with land reclamation.<sup>ix x</sup> Anything which can throw light on this complex process will be useful.

### **b) How was this area settled in early (pre-16<sup>th</sup> century) times?**

This corner of Faversham is often assumed to have been continuously settled since at least the Roman period.<sup>xi</sup> The use of this part of the river for shipping e.g. from the nearby Roman settlement of Durolevum<sup>xii</sup> seems likely, as does the use of the stream for milling: both uses are mentioned in documents from the mid-medieval period onwards.<sup>xiii</sup> No archaeological evidence has been found for these activities in the early period, and testing of these assumptions is needed.

### **c) Industrial development**

The rapid development of relatively large scale industry from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards in this zone and its complete disappearance by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century needs careful charting, not least because of regeneration proposals for the area under consideration.

### **d) The people**

Changes in the lifestyles of the local people in relation to the changes noted in (c) are of key interest in this community archaeology project.

It is hoped that this paper will make some small contribution towards answering these questions and be able to identify possible ways forward.

## 2) The question of tides

Of the above mentioned sources, only the Gas Works Evaluation (GWE) and the Ordnance Wharf Evaluation (OWE) can contribute directly to the question of river/marine deposits. The four *Hunt the Saxons* (HSX05) test pits went to a maximum depth of 1.2 metres (c 3.5m OD) and did not reach any silt layers. Three of these test pits (23A, 23B and 22) were in gardens at the southern end of the area, comparable only to GWE profile 8 and the South Section. Profile 8 reached the natural (head brickearth) at c OD 3.2. Other GWE profiles have the natural at greater depths, or not encountered at all. Fig 2 shows the range of heights covered by the various excavations and their relationship to modern sea level.

Fig 2 also shows information coming from one of the few deep excavations to have taken place close to Faversham Creek. This was the boring of a new shaft for a sewage pumping station in 1965 just down stream from the main sluice on the town (east) side<sup>xiv</sup>. Starting at an OD of c 3.5m and penetrating an initial make-up layer, the shaft went down through, in total, around 6m of 'grey-black mud silts'.<sup>xv</sup> At around 0 OD, 150 large sherds of 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery were recovered, along with portions of leather shoes. Ranging from around 0 OD to + 1.5 OD were upright wooden rectangular posts, running east-west, with more posts slightly further down. These posts are tentatively interpreted as remains of a medieval wharf or staging from which the 13<sup>th</sup> century rubbish went into the mud.

This would give the bank-foot 13<sup>th</sup> century creek bed at present day 0 OD, with the wharf (presumably at bank-top level) at around 1/1.5 OD. The two metres of silts above the pottery deposit were seen by Philp as having accumulated subsequent to the deposition, and then sealed by wharf building in the late 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century. At a depth of -2.5m, a thin peat layer was revealed which Philp sees as an ancient land surface of unknown date.

Table 1 shows the top OD level of silts as identified in the Gas Works and Ordnance Wharf excavations and the 1965 sewage shaft. There is close agreement between the top levels of river/marine deposits at the three locations i.e. 2.5 m OD, even though there are uncertainties about the contribution of dumps from dredging (see later, Part 4). All of the silts exposed in excavations are overlain by later make-up of rubble and surfaces (see Fig 2). In practice, this suggests that the medieval bank lies below the top silt levels in the reclaimed areas with the bank-foot medieval creek bed 2.5 m below this.

In 2005 a study of Faversham Creek basin was carried out by HR Wallingford, Hydraulics Consultants,<sup>xvi</sup> to inform decisions about regeneration of the Creek basin. Although they were only interested in changes in silt levels since 1993, their data is useful for the purposes of this paper, and is partly summarised in Table 2. Fig 3 shows the locations of the cross sections used in the Navigation Study

**Table 1: taken from published reports**

**Ordnance Datum (OD) refers to mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall, measured for the period 1915-1921. Due to isostatic subsidence, the equivalent mean sea level figure for 1300AD was lower down in absolute terms. A peat layer found at -2.5.OD in the pumping station shaft is almost certainly a much earlier land surface of uncertain date: in the post-glacial prehistoric period, local sea level was much lower than now.**

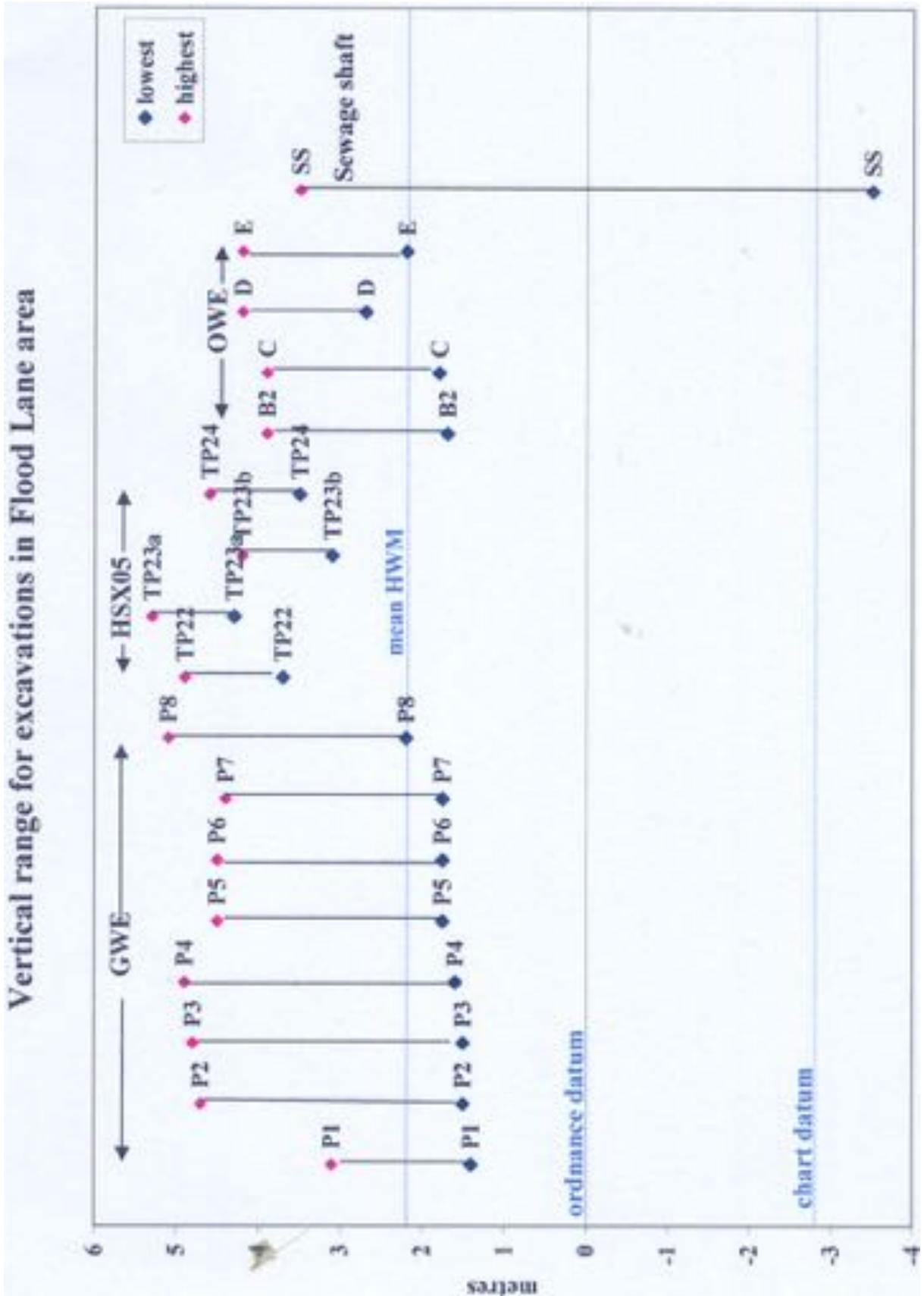
<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Stratigraphic location</b>	<b>OD in metres</b>
OWE trench B2	Top of 'pure' silts	2.4
OWE trench C	Top of 'pure' silts	2.0
OWE trench D	Top of 'pure' silts	3.0
OWE trench E	Top of 'pure' silts	Not reached at 2 (structural intervention)
GWE profile 1	Top of alluvium	2.6
GWE profile 2	Top of alluvium	2.6
GWE profile 3	Top of alluvium	2.6
GWE profile 4	Top of river deposits	2 with reeds and straw at 1.75
GWE profile 5	Top of river deposits	2.0
GWE profile 6	Top of river deposits	2.0, with waterlogged wooden upright
Pumping station	Top of silts	c 2.5
Pumping station	Top of wooden posts	c 1.5
Pumping station	Pottery layer	0.0
Pumping station	Peat layer (under silts)	-2.5
HSX05 TP24	Base of pit	3.5 No silt revealed

**Table 2: Taken from the HR Wallingford report**

**NB: Heights were given based on Chart Datum (CD) and have been converted into OD using a constant of 2.8 supplied by Medway Ports Authority.<sup>xvii</sup>**

<b>Profile numbers and dates</b>	<b>Max. height OD of bed level 1m from north (west) bank</b>	<b>Min. height OD of bed level in profile</b>	<b>Max. height OD of bed level 1m from south (east) bank</b>	
A1	1983	2.5	-0.3	1.0
	1994	2.9	0.1	0.9
	2005	2.9	0.3	1.0
A3	1983	2.7	-1.0	0.6
	1994	2.9	0.3	1.6
	2005	2.9	0.2	1.5
A5	1983	1.7	0.0	0.7
	1994	2.9	0.1	0.5
	2005	2.9	0.2	0.5
A8	1983	2.9	-0.2	0.0
	1994	2.9	-0.5	0.0
	2005	2.9	0.2	.4

Fig 2: range of depths of excavations in the Upper Basin and surrounding areas





**Fig 3: Cross sections of Faversham Creek used in the Wallingford report**  
From sluice: A1, A3, A5, A8

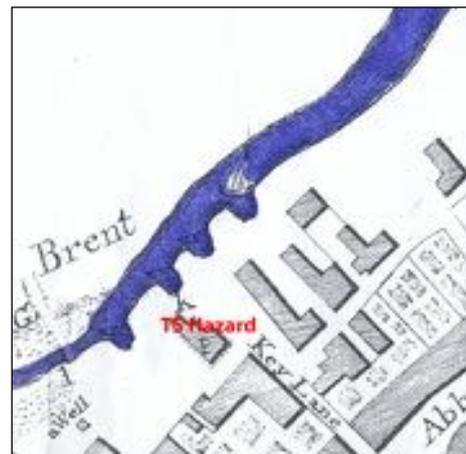
As can be seen from Table 2, the bed level on the town (south/east) side of the creek is much less than the 2m OD top of the silt identified in the excavations, and at or close to the OD level of the 13<sup>th</sup> century deposits in the Sewage Shaft (Table 1). What has happened to Philp's 2m of post-1300 silt?

The history of this part of the creek is one of disturbances, with at least four major interventions:

- 1559: building of the first main sluice to be used to flush the creek. The location was just to the west of the current main sluice.<sup>xviii</sup>
- By 1710: the channel had been rerouted slightly to the east and a new sluice built.<sup>xix</sup>
- Late 18<sup>th</sup> century: the channel rerouted westwards close to its former position and a new sluice built, with the creek widened and straightened.<sup>xx</sup>
- Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century: major dredging and brick reinforcement of wharves in the upper basin. This was mainly to accommodate greatly increased coal imports for the gas works<sup>xxi</sup>.

**Fig 4: The TS Hazard area in c 1750<sup>xxii</sup>**

Fig 4 also shows clearly an embayment for small craft next to the 15<sup>th</sup> century Town Warehouse (nowadays known as TS Hazard). As far as I can tell, this embayment is the location for the sinking of the sewage shaft that found the 0.0 OD 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery, and confirms the long-term usage of this part of the Creek frontage as a wharf (Town Quay)<sup>xxiii</sup> The late 18<sup>th</sup> century shift of the channel westwards must have filled in this embayment and sealed it from the modern creek. The later extensive dredging of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century must have removed huge quantities of mud and silt and although they were supposed to dump it 'not less than 60 feet from the creek



in fields<sup>xxiv</sup> one wonders just how far from the bank this material actually went. Is this some of the made ground on the Gas Works site? Perhaps because of this dredging, the modern course of the Westbrook at low tide runs close to the east bank. It seems that only on the west side of the Creek Upper Basin, where there were no wharves and little settlement that silt has been allowed to accumulate to great depths.

Allen et al see GWE Profile 8 and the South Section as showing an early bank side location. They suggest that in that area the Creek bank was formerly about 60m inland from its current position, with reclamation taking place by revetment and infill around the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to give a channel much the same as at present. Presumably the wooden upright (Profile 6) at c2m OD and reeds/straw deposits (Profile 5) at c 1.75 OD date to before this reclamation took place. The pottery amount was small, but sherds ranging in date from AD1175 to the 17<sup>th</sup> century recovered from the South Section in silty clays suggest that this area was adjacent to occupation i.e. that these sherds were debris thrown from the sloping bank (back gardens of West St houses) into the shallow, muddy stream/creek.<sup>xxv</sup>

Some kind of control of the Westbrook itself, however, does seem to date back to at least the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. A pictorial map of 1520 shows what seems to be a muddy millrace coming along the present Westbrook course to meet a main stream coming down on the western side of the Mill?<sup>xxvi</sup> The main difficulty here relates to the adjacent Stonebridge Pond. The curious layout is a consequence of the important gunpowder industry which developed here 'in the time of Queen Elizabeth if not earlier'.<sup>xxvii</sup> These modifications of the stream/creek were in place by 1750 but the start date of the Stonebridge pond complex is uncertain at present.<sup>xxviii</sup> Even the course of the pre-gunpowder stream/creek is not known. Although the contours of the basin suggest a route to the west, it is quite possible that water impoundment for other uses of water power predates the gunpowder industry in this area (see later, Part 4) The complete lack of environmental archaeological evidence means that the penetration of the tide in pre-gunpowder times remains a mystery.

Finally, the location of the medieval and earlier banks of the Upper Basin a) along the stretch between the sluice and the Coop superstore site on the east, and b) between the sluice and Ordnance Wharf on the west, remain largely uninvestigated both archaeologically and historically: this will be addressed along with other issues in the last part of this paper.

### Early settlement (up to medieval)

The Ordnance Wharf and most of the Gas Works excavations did not find anything earlier than 19<sup>th</sup> century: indeed, few finds other than various rubbles are reported from either site, though this could be to do with the conditions at the time of excavation and the methodological approaches. This part will use the four Test Pits (where all material was meticulously sieved)<sup>xxix</sup> and the South Section and profile 8 from the Gas Works excavations. Of these, all except TP24 are on what Allen et al identified as the former bank/ bank edge of the early river/creek

Although artefactual evidence for Roman settlement had been found very close to this area<sup>xxx</sup> and is abundant in the Faversham area<sup>xxxi</sup>, only one small, much-abraded sherd of Roman pottery was identified from this area (TP23A) The absence of Saxon occupational evidence is perhaps less remarkable, being generally far less abundant. Pottery from around AD1150 to 1500 was, however, found in all of the Test Pits and in the GWE South Section

### Table 3: Medieval pottery

The numbers show weight in grams and, in brackets, the percentage of medieval pottery in the appropriate Spit. Weightings have been applied in cases where Spit 4 was not fully excavated.

	<b>Spit 1 (0-30cm)</b>	<b>Spit 2 (31-60cm)</b>	<b>Spit 3 (61-90cm)</b>	<b>Spit 4 (91-120cm)</b>
<b>TP24</b>	12 (8%)	0	8 (10%)	0
<b>TP22</b>	10 (1%)	16 (0.8%)	55 (2%)	75 (13%)*
<b>TP23A</b>	12 (1%)	23 (7%)	8 (3%)	276 (54%)
<b>TP23B</b>	0	0	0	22 (100%)
<b>GWE South Section</b>	Fill (11) : one sherd AD 1175-1250, depth 1.3m Fill (3) : several sherds, storage jar, AD 1375-1500, depth 1.2m			

\* includes 2 sherds Saxo-Norman AD 1150-1200

The South Section sherds came from grey-green silty clay contexts, seen as fluvial, i.e. the broken pottery had been dumped in shallow muddy frequently flooded ground at the foot of gardens. The Test Pit medieval pottery was, however, from clay matrices. As is typical of garden deposits, a complicated sequence of mini-events (digging rubbish pits, turning over soil, dumping grate ash, importing top soil, improving soils, terracing using demolition materials, surfacing paths) has resulted in churned deposits. These deposits are, however, often sandwiched between undisturbed strata which are outcomes of specific events (e.g. demolition layers or occupational surfaces). Even with churned deposits, the frequency of older pottery does usually increase with depth except in the non-bank side Test Pit 24

TP 23B bottomed out initially with the base of a demolished wall running north-south (left in situ) and then, 10cm further down to the west, a cobbled surface. The only pottery found in the slot formed by the wall base and cobbles was medieval. TP23A, higher up on a terrace closer to the house, bottomed out around 1.1.m with what appeared to be a horizontal lath and plaster wall, which was interpreted as a remnant of the house which had occupied the site

previous to the present house built around 1640. Yet 54% of the pottery in the deposits immediately above the plaster was medieval, the rest being 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century with no 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century pottery content. Possibly this horizontal wall was a remnant of an even earlier property, or perhaps the covering layer was imported from a nearby garden or farmland.

TP 22 was not layered in the same way and was excavated to the full depth permitted (1.2m). Spit 4 was dominated by 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century pottery with other finds such as a Nuremburg Jetton (SF46) and five 17<sup>th</sup> clay pipes in a soft brown loam-clay matrix. The amount of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century pottery was negligible. Here the medieval content is residual, working its way 'upwards' through garden-working processes. The house associated with this Test Pit is one of the oldest surviving buildings in town (15<sup>th</sup> century), and the rear ground floor is now partially 'basementised', due to the build up of the garden deposits.

The GWE profile 8 showed natural brickearth reached at a depth of c2m from a start point of 5.1 OD. None of the Test Pits penetrated as deeply (see fig 2) and our feeling was that we were down to a dominantly 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century level at the bottom of Test Pits 22 and 23A. Test Pit 23B possibly exposed earlier deposits, and dating of the cobbled surface (rounded beach pebbles about 8 cm diameter) would have been useful.

Nine 15<sup>th</sup> century houses still stand in Lower West Street <sup>xxxii</sup> and the Test Pits and GWE South Section have provided evidence for continuous occupation back to AD1150 on the Creek side. The fact that no evidence was found for earlier activity may simply be a reflection of the depth of the garden deposits in this area.

#### 4) The rise and fall of industry.

This part relies mainly on evidence from maps and documents, although much industrial debris and make-up was found in all of the excavations.

A mill for Faversham is recorded in the Domesday Book, and documents relating to the Maison Dieu at Ospringe refer to mills owned on the Westbrook.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The precise location of most of these early mills is not known and the industrial process carried out is not recorded but was probably corn milling. The earliest definite information comes from the 1520 pictorial map mentioned in part 1 above and shows an undershot mill built up over the stream supported by a stone wall. The 1520 mill does look like a tidal mill. Tidal mills were common by the 16<sup>th</sup> century but the widespread assumption that the Saxon (Domesday) mill was also tidal is less justifiable, although not impossible – the earliest known tidal mill in Kent is one on Dover harbour, mentioned in about AD 1070 as an obstruction to shipping.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

There is much debate over the location of the mills, with the 1520 mill often seen as being located on what is now Ordnance Wharf. An evaluation carried out in 2005 at Ordnance Wharf, however, did seem to show that this inter-stream tongue of land is an improbable location, and prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century was probably just a mud bank.<sup>xxxv</sup> Wilkinson interprets the palisade shown behind the mill in the 1520 map as being possibly related to early gunpowder works. The date for the beginnings of the gunpowder industry, as already stated, is uncertain but could be as early as this time and it has been suggested that there could be some link with Faversham Abbey though, as Arthur Percival points out, documentary evidence is not available.

Certainly by the 17<sup>th</sup> century the gunpowder industry was well established in the Westbrook valley<sup>xxxvi</sup> and the Jacob map of 1750<sup>xxxvii</sup> shows clearly the modification to the drainage to produce Stonebridge Ponds and the location of two gunpowder water mills just behind Ordnance Wharf. Either of these two mill sites is a more probable location for the 1520 mill, in my view, given the continuity that often exists for this kind of establishment. In 1750, however, the rest of the study zone for this paper is empty of development except for the line of properties along West St itself. No wharves are shown at this end of the creek, although a Wardmote book of 1555 refers to ‘Lady Amcotts Wharf’ upstream from Town Quay.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

By 1840, as shown on the tithe map,<sup>xxxix</sup> considerable change has taken place. The zone has begun to fill up with a scatter of cottages, particularly along Flood Lane, and a number of industrial buildings. This includes a Malt House owned by Samuel Shepherd at the Creek end of Flood Lane and next to this is the infant Faversham Gas-Light and Coke Company (founded in 1830) with one tiny gasholder. Other shed-like buildings lie to the east. What we now call Ordnance Wharf is labelled here as Island Wharf. To the west of the Flood Lane/West St junction, on the Westbrook by Stonebridge (built 1776) a 4 storey warehouse has been built, and functions as a wool storehouse and fellmongers.<sup>xl</sup>

By 1865, the zone was packed with development. The Malt House had gone and the Gas Works had expanded and now had two gasholders. Most of the new development, however, was housing. Flood Lane was lined with properties and the lower gardens of the West Street houses had been exploited to create new housing areas, notably Ordnance Place (for gunpowder workers) just south of the Gas Works, and Well Lane running down from West

Street to the Creek in the eastern part of the zone. The long trench used in the GWE ran across this area of 19<sup>th</sup> century housing.

By 1907, the Gas Works had expanded even more, to the east and the south. There were now three gasholders and Ordnance Place and most of Well Lane had disappeared under them. A new block of offices had been built on West St itself. By this time, the Gas Company had taken over Ordnance Wharf and built the Purifier building, using the Wharf itself for the Guiseley Purifiers.<sup>xli</sup> Large amounts of coal were being brought in by sea at this stage, so considerable wharfage was needed and dredging carried out to enable ships of up to 200 tons to berth. (See section 2) The Flood Lane houses have, however, survived the ravages of the Gas Works, and an abattoir has been established behind number 70 West St. The Gas Works reached its spatial apogee in 1916, with a last great expansion, this time southwards to West St itself.<sup>xlii</sup> This meant the demolition of numbers 79 to 88 in West St. although not, of course, the Gas Works West St Office. A giant new gasholder now loomed over West St, and was not demolished until 1991.

Post war maps show an overwhelming dominance of this zone by the Gas Works. At this stage coal was being brought in by rail<sup>xliii</sup>, the beginning of the decline in creek usage. A large warehouse and depot occupies the space to the east and apart from West St itself, only Flood Lane retained its housing. Nearly all of this was, however, demolished during the late fifties and early sixties, including the pair of cottages shown on the 1840 map next to the Malt House. The gunpowder industry had migrated to Scotland in the 1930s, and the Stonebridge Pond area was being used for allotments (as it still is).

Since the 1990s, the entire Gas Works site has been occupied by a stylish Coop superstore and carefully landscaped car park. At the time of writing (2008) the Purifier building still stands, but is boarded up with no plans for usage at the moment. The office building on West St, empty for years, became the Gasworks Gallery but is now disused again. Flood Lane is now a charming recreational open space and the West St properties are once more well-cared for and sought after.

**Fig 5: Flood Lane (east side) houses on the verge of demolition in the 1960s and the same view in 2007.  
Early photograph by courtesy of Arthur Percival**



**Fig 6: Flood Lane houses (west side) in around 1895 and the same view in 2007. The stream has disappeared.**  
The early picture is taken from the Croseur slide collection at the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, Faversham



**Fig 7: Lower West Street in 1968 and in 2007, showing the re-gentrification of the area**  
Early photograph from Swaine 1969



## 5) Changing lifestyles

Insufficient evidence exists to make judgments about the prosperity of this area during the medieval period, but the surviving substantial 15<sup>th</sup> century properties do imply a degree of comfort at least by the later medieval period. At this time, Faversham's Guildhall and market are thought to have been in this corner of town, only moving up to the present location in 1547 ( see *Hunt the Saxons*, in prep) . It is clear, though, that this part of town did well in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century. The pottery assemblages of this period from TPs 22 and 23A show a variety of quality and imported types, such as early English Delft, Raeren, Rhenish Stoneware, Bellarmine ware and some small sherds of early 19<sup>th</sup> century porcelain. Fifteen of the larger brick-built properties in the area were built at this time, probably replacing earlier timber framed properties, and some timber framed properties were fronted with brick and generally modernised in fashionable ways.

The infilling properties built from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards were, however, a very different type of housing. They were small cheaply built properties, sometimes brick but often weather boarded. Fig 5 shows Flood Lane cottages on the brink of demolition in the early 1960s. Phyllis, a local who has lived in the area for 80 years, tells us that the other Flood Lane cottages shown in Fig 6 had no proper sanitation but used the stream at the back, and that most of the houses were not really fit for human habitation. The stream visible in the 1895 slide has since been filled in, using rubble from the demolished houses.

No known pictures exist for the short-lived mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Place and Well St cottages, but it can be assumed from the layout that these were housing for the workers, probably weatherboard. At this time, the West St houses have for the most part lost their extensive gardens and are increasingly hemmed in by low cost housing and smelly, fast-growing industries. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, these have mostly gone, or are about to go but lower West St is in a dismal state, as is shown by a 1969 photograph of neglected houses damaged by lorries and the gasholder filling the skyline.<sup>xliv</sup> (Fig 7) It is only in the last 15 or so years that this corner of town has recovered its former grace.

## Conclusions: Things to come

At the time of the building of the new Coop superstore in the mid-90s, Faversham Creek was seen by many local people as a bit of an embarrassment, little more than an open sewer and bordered mainly by industries, some of which were active but others declining or dead. Only the sailing barge enthusiasts downstream at Standard Quay and Iron Wharf kept the sea links going. Over the last ten years, however, the nationwide fashion for waterside residential developments has led to the Creekside becoming a desirable location (much to the astonishment of locals). Four developments have already taken place along the banks below the sluice gates, and over the last three years at least five more proposals have been put forward. If all had been agreed, Faversham Creek would by now be lined with private residential development. Most relevant to the Upper Basin were proposals for Ordnance Wharf which included a maritime museum as well as fashionable flats and for Weston's car park area for residential development. .

All this interest has led to much discussion about the future of the neglected and rapidly silting Creek. In 2005, a multi-representational group was formed to review the situation<sup>xlv</sup>. The HR Wallingford report was commissioned to examine the situation more closely, and has been invaluable. A fundamental agreed priority for the Creek has been the retention of its identity as a navigable waterway (as it has been for 2000 years) and to retain traditional Creekside activities. At the time of writing, the immediate needs of restoration to action of sluice and swing bridge and major dredging of the creek have been agreed. The Coop site, including the empty Purifier building takes on a new light with all this interest, and rumours abound. What ten years ago was seen as a welcome use for a toxic and unpleasant site seems far less obvious now. Even the future of the charming allotment site at Stonebridge Ponds cannot be taken for granted, although it is owned by Swale Council.

This paper has tried to show that this is an important archaeological area which has only recently been looked at in a serious way. Although the broad outlines have emerged, many questions are outstanding. The early stages of the gunpowder industry (16<sup>th</sup> century?) are shrouded in mystery<sup>xlvi</sup>, as indeed are the medieval and Roman waterfronts. Prehistory has scarcely been considered.

Development is hard to resist (although Faversham people have a pretty good try) but the work currently being done by the Creek Consortium means that it should at least be controlled in a way that does not damage the town. What is essential is that all changes are accompanied by thoughtful and thorough archaeology, paying as much attention to the industrial as to the early history. Possible priorities could be:

- Auguring & environmental investigations in the Stonebridge Pond basin
- Excavation of early mill sites
- Investigation of the west (north) bank of the Creek
- Investigation of early sluice sites
- Watching brief on dredging if levels at 0 OD or below are reached.

Any development of a creek museum/ heritage centre would be able to make good use of such investigations of a much-neglected historic asset.

**P M Reid**

**November 2008**

- 
- <sup>i</sup> www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/huntthesaxons
- <sup>ii</sup> Allen T, A. Ward & J. Cotter 1992 *Evaluation of Faversham Gasworks* Canterbury: CAT report
- <sup>iii</sup> SWAT Archaeology 2005 *Archaeological Evaluation at Ordnance Wharf, Flood Lane, Faversham, Kent*, commissioned by C Strickland, developer.
- <sup>iv</sup> HR Wallingford 2006 *Faversham Creek Navigation Study* commissioned by Swale Borough Council
- <sup>v</sup> Wilkinson P 2006 *The Historical Development of the Port of Faversham 1580-1780* BAR British Series 413
- <sup>vi</sup> Swaine, A 1969 *Faversham Conserved* KCC/ Faversham Borough Council
- <sup>vii</sup> Philp, B 2003 'Discoveries at Faversham Creek 1965' *Kent Archaeological Review* No 153 pp 57-69
- <sup>viii</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea\\_level\\_rise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_level_rise)
- <sup>ix</sup> Evans, J 1953 Archaeological Horizons in the North Kent Marshes **Arch. Cant. LXVI p103-146**
- <sup>x</sup> Jackson I 2003 Archaeology of the Medway Estuary Upchurch Archaeological Research Group p5-9
- <sup>xi</sup> Faversham: Archaeological Assessment Document 2003 Kent Historic Towns Survey KCC Heritage Conservation Group p 7
- <sup>xii</sup> Faversham: Archaeological Assessment Document 2003 op.cit. p8
- <sup>xiii</sup> Faversham: Archaeological Assessment Document 2003 op.cit. p14
- <sup>xiv</sup> Philp, op. cit. p 57
- <sup>xv</sup> Philp op.cit. p 60 (section)
- <sup>xvi</sup> HR Wallingford 2006 *Faversham Creek Navigation Study* commissioned by Swale Borough Council
- <sup>xvii</sup> Sheerness Harbour Master, pers comm
- <sup>xviii</sup> Wilkinson 2006 op. cit. p22
- <sup>xix</sup> Wilkinson 2006 op.cit. p 23
- <sup>xx</sup> Wilkinson 2006 op.cit. p23
- <sup>xxi</sup> SWAT Archaeology op.cit. p 19
- <sup>xxii</sup> Jacob E 1774 Map from *History of Faversham*, reprint 1974 Faversham Society
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Philp 2003 op.cit
- <sup>xxiv</sup> SWAT Archaeology 2005 op. cit. p18
- <sup>xxv</sup> Allen T, A. Ward & J. Cotter 1992 *Evaluation of Faversham Gasworks* Canterbury: CAT report Section 7
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Wilkinson 2006 op.cit. p22 Fig 23
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Jacob E 1774 *History of Faversham*, reprint 1974 Faversham Society p
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Percival A 1967 *Faversham's Gunpowder Industry* Faversham Papers Series No 4, Faversham Society p1
- <sup>xxix</sup> See [www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/](http://www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/) for detailed accounts of Test Pits
- <sup>xxx</sup> Kent SMR MKE 4132 1770 find of cremation urns.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> For example, Whiting W 'A Roman Cemetery discovered at Ospringe in 1920' *Arch. Cant. xxxv, xxxvi, xxxvii*
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Swaine 1969 op.cit. p 121-123
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Frohnsdorff M. pers.comm.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/tidal>
- <sup>xxxv</sup> SWAT Archaeology 2006 p 21
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Percival A 1967 op. cit.p 2-9
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Jacobs E 1774 Map of Faversham in *History of Faversham*, reprint 1974 Faversham Society
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Wilkinson 2009 op.cit. p 14
- <sup>xxxix</sup> 1840 tithe map, published by KCC
- <sup>xl</sup> Auction notice 1849 from the archive at the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre
- <sup>xli</sup> SWAT Archaeology 2006 op.cit. p 19
- <sup>xlii</sup> Percival pers. comm..
- <sup>xliii</sup> **Online gas works archives**
- <sup>xliv</sup> Swaine 1969 op.cit. p120
- <sup>xlv</sup> [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk)
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Percival A 1967 op.cit. p1