



Excavation Report

The Market Inn, 42 East Street, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8AT



Project Codes:	MI23 & HSX23		
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Part 1: The Setting

1. Introduction

Under the project title *The Hunt For The Saxon Royal Manor*, and following research carried out in 2016 & 2017, the Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group (FSARG) undertook several excavations at The Market Inn in an attempt to identify the site of the Saxon Royal Manor in upper Faversham. A document of AD811 named Faversham as the 'Kings little town' and the market dates to this time. In the 1860s an exceptionally rich early Saxon cemetery was discovered in the area where Faversham railway station now stands. In earlier projects, FSARG had found archaeological evidence for a Saxon settlement down in the Stonebridge Crossing area which we see as the working merchant town. Now we are looking for the Royal Manor itself.

In 2016 our starting point in the search was a single piece of evidence for domestic occupation in the upper town. This was a mid-Saxon loom weight found on a bomb site in East Street whilst being cleared in 1953 to build the present-day Post Office. On two nearby sites we had found mid Saxon Ipswich ware and identified a possible Saxon chalk floor and post holes. These led us to realise that the Gatefield Lane-Cross Lane route was very probably the Saxon 'High Street'.

In 2018, 3 keyhole pits were dug at The Market Inn - KP173, KP174, and KP180, with KP174 producing the first major Saxon assemblage in Faversham (discounting the 19th century grave finds).¹ The following year, FSARG opened a larger excavation area (OA186)² which was situated to include and expand on KP174. This revealed a Saxon rubbish dump, dated no later than AD700, under which was a possible iron smelting bloomery site. The large quantity of deer and probably wild boar was evidence of high-status feasting. Although we had almost certainly found the rubbish pit associated with the Lords Hall, our quest to find the Royal Manor remained.

Following a 4-year gap where our attention was focused on investigations elsewhere, we returned to the Market Inn to continue our search.

2. Geographical, geological, and historical background

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, to join Faversham Creek at Iron Wharf, Grid Reference TR 012354 62131. There is some evidence that the Cooksditch originally rose near St Catherines church³ and was cut short by the creation of the Recreation Ground in 1862.

¹ www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org Excavations, Searching for the Kings Manor, KP173, KP174, KP180 The Market Inn, East Street, Faversham

² www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org Excavations, Searching for the Kings Manor, OA186, The Market Inn, East Street, Faversham

³ www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org.uk Excavations, Preston - A Most Peculiar Parish 2013-15, Preston Farm report p5

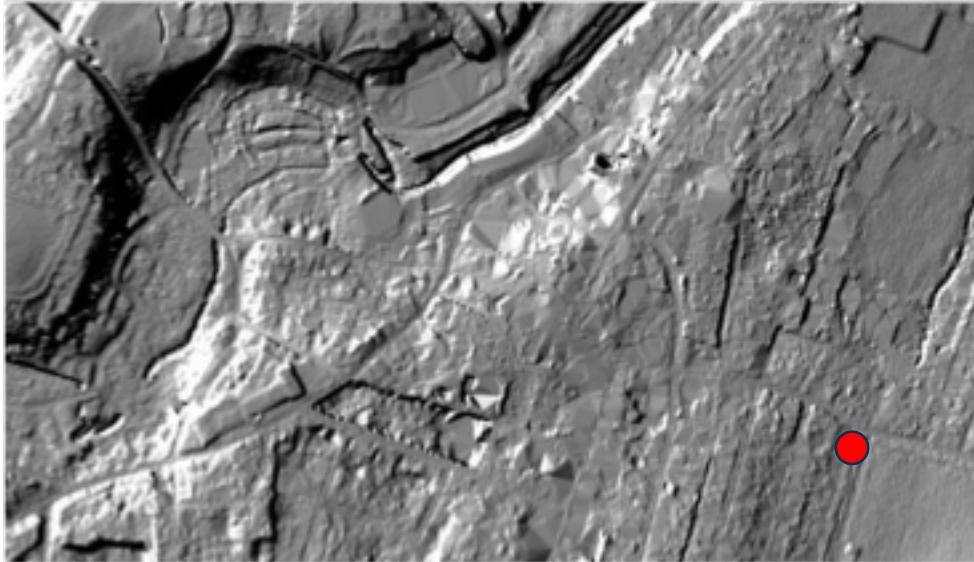


Fig 1: The LIDAR map shows the relief of the land in Faversham town centre, with the 'dug off' areas showing up very clearly.

b) Geology

The gentle downward slope to the north is related to underlying chalk dipping northwards to disappear under Thanet Beds and then under London Clay. Overlying the chalk, however, is a layer up to 2m - 3m thick of superficial deposits, laid down during the last major glaciation. These are highly significant for human settlement.

In this part of Faversham, the superficial deposits are mainly distinctive yellow-brown Head Brickearth, often overlying a gravel superficial deposit. The Kentish Stock brick industry flourished in the Faversham area between around 1850 and 1920, and large areas around and in the town under later housing development have been 'dug off', removing all except the most recent and most ancient archaeology.⁴ In the LIDAR map in **Fig 1**, the large 'excavations' in the lower centre are 'dug off' areas. Central areas have, however, escaped this destruction due to their pre-1860 enclosure of plots.

The most recent superficial deposit in this area is alluvium in the Westbrook and Cooksditch valleys. The Cooksditch valley lies to the immediate east of the Market Inn.



Key:

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

Fig 2: Geological map of central Faversham, the same area as in Fig 1.⁵ The distinctive Davington Plateau (blue and orange) and Stonebridge Ponds (cream) areas can easily be identified in Fig 1. The Market Inn sites are grouped closely together and shown in red.

⁴ TWIST Sydney 1984 *Stock Bricks of Swale* The Sittingbourne Society: Sittingbourne, Kent

⁵ British Geological Survey, 1:50 000 series. Faversham: England and Wales Sheet 273

c) Known historical background

The Market Inn is a handsome building, built in 1865 on the corner of East Street and Park Road. The land was originally part of the Cooksditch House estate and was purchased by Henry Shepherd and John Mares in 1863. It stands close to the former site of the Cattle Market, which is nowadays occupied by Bob Amor Close. At the rear of the property on the other side of the car park is a row of garages, formerly stables presumably for farmers visiting the cattle market.⁶

The Market Inn has an unusually large garden. Part of it is used for the local Bat and Trap layout but there is also the equivalent of a small field adjacent to this, surprisingly undeveloped for this part of Faversham but very handy for archaeologists.

3. Location of both pits

The previous KP173 and KP174 pit locations (**Fig 3**) were determined partly by the geophysical survey, and partly due to the knowledge that the area to the north of the garden had seen considerable disturbance when the extension to the pub was built, and because of previous landscaping. The survey hinted at a considerable amount of rubble, which was consistent with comments from several long-standing patrons of the pub. To determine whether a larger trench was feasible in this area, it was decided to dig a small 1-day exploratory pit to investigate the extent of the rubble. The findings from this determined the location of KP194.

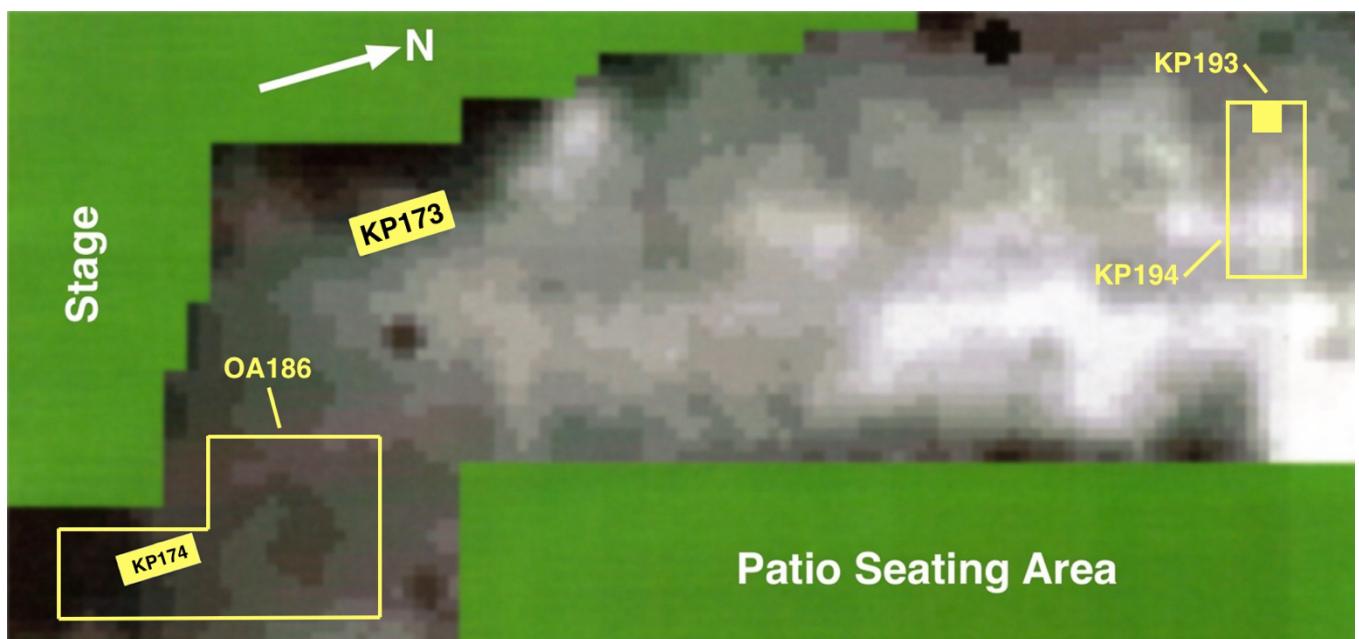


Fig 3: Location of KP193 and KP194 together with the earlier excavations KP173, KP174 and OA186.

KP193

4. Procedure

A 0.75m x 0.75m area was pegged out, then measured and recorded back to fixed points of the pub extension. Since this area was open to the public, it was also fenced off.

The pit was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which were fully recorded. The keyhole was excavated to a depth of 55cm. The excavated soil was sieved and then placed in builders' bags so

⁶ STEVENS P. 2005 *Faversham's Historic Pubs and Breweries* Faversham paper 92 Faversham Society.

as to keep the site clean and tidy. The spoil was then checked frequently with a metal detector as a secondary measure to ensure nothing had been overlooked.

A single small find was recorded separately. The spoil was replaced and tamped down, the turf replaced and the whole pit generously watered.

5. Excavation Results

After the turf (context [01]) was removed, a layer of soft dark brown clayey silty soil formed the next context [02]. This extended down to around 45cm and contained around 19kg of rubble (see **Fig 4**) and other building material. Context [02] contained the only small find (SF1) which was a Walkers salt and vinegar crisp packet with a very useful 'best before' date of 06 SEP 03, the date almost certainly an indication of when the groundwork was carried out.

At a depth of 45cm, the rubble layer ended to reveal [03]. This soil had more of an orange hue with very few inclusions, but did include 2 small pieces of medieval pottery, 2 pieces of bone, and small quantities of flint. Context [03] was only excavated a few centimetres to ensure that there was no more rubble present.



Fig 4: Some of the building rubble from [02].

6. Summary

The aim of establishing the extent of the rubble had been successful. The depth of around 45cm – 50cm meant that a larger excavation later in the summer was feasible, and provided the useful information to allow us to modify our digging method whereby we could remove the first 0.5m fairly quickly knowing that it has limited archaeological value.

KP194

7. Procedure

A 2m x 4m trench KP194 (incorporating the earlier KP193 test pit) was pegged out then measured and recorded back to fixed points of the pub extension. Since this area was open to the public, it was also fenced off. The turf was cut, relocated, and watered throughout the 2 weeks.

The pit was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which were fully recorded. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6m, then an auger used to extract a core sample to a depth of 3.2m. Excavated soil was sieved, with the spoil checked regularly with a metal detector, and the soil stored in a builders' bag to keep the area tidy. Small finds were recorded separately, and section drawings were made at each change of context, with a plan drawing done at the end. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the turf replaced. The area was then surrounded with fencing to protect the grass to allow it to re-establish itself.

8. Excavation Results

The topsoil [02], together with a mixture of concrete (95kg), brick (33kg), tile etc. extended to a maximum depth of 66cm. This was, as expected from the results of the previous test pit KP193, a very mixed layer of material with pottery dating from prehistoric right through to late post-medieval, a few examples of which can be seen in **Fig 5**.

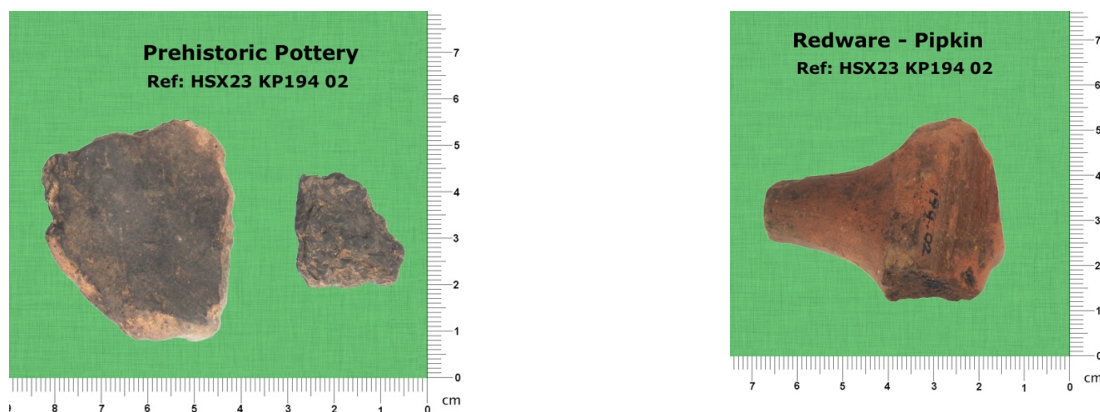


Fig 5: A few examples of pottery from [02].

A context change was first recognised at a depth of 32cm, which ultimately extended to 72cm. However, this was a highly disturbed and irregular layer, containing lenses and pockets of material from both [02] and the new context. The decision was taken to classify this as a *transition* layer [03] (see **Fig 8**).



Fig 6: Late Saxon pottery from [03].

A central 60cm wide slot running the length of the trench was dug to determine the full extent of [03], and once established, the whole of [03] was removed.

The distribution of pottery dating was similar to that of [02] but with the addition of some Early-Mid Saxon and Late Saxon pot (**Fig 6**). The range of pottery is shown in **Fig 7**.

With the transition layer clear, a more uniform, compact brickearth layer was defined as [04] (see **Fig 9**).



Fig 7: The vast date range of pottery from [03], ranging from prehistoric through to modern.



Fig 8: The irregular surface of [03].

A further exploratory slot 60cm wide running the length of the trench was dug to investigate the extent of [04]. Bulk finds consisted of small quantities of animal bone, a Mesolithic blade, oyster shell fragments and small pieces (24g) of red brick. There were just 8 small pieces of pottery ranging from prehistoric to medieval in date. At a depth of 92cm, no further bulk finds were found. Due to the change in finds, a new context number [05] was given.

Excavation continued in the slot to a depth of 1.2m. Context [05] yielded a single small 2g piece of medieval pottery, and 2 pieces of flint, 1 of which was heat-stressed.



Fig 9: The surface of [04] looking North.

Devoid of any further finds, a slot 60cm x 1.5m was dug central within the [05] slot. At a depth of 1.6m a sweep with a metal detector identified a signal at the bottom. At around 1.65m small iron fragments were found. Hand excavation stopped at 1.7m. An auger was used beyond this point to take out a core sample so see how far the brickearth extended. Samples were taken to a depth of 3.2m. **Fig 10** shows the core removed.



Fig 10: The core sample taken with the auger to a maximum depth of 3.2m.

At its lowest depth, loose gravel was found. This made the brickearth layer some 2.5m thick.

9. Summary

The rubble and general mix of material was expected and was in line with the results from the earlier test pit KP193. The question to be answered was whether Saxon activity would be evident *beneath* this disturbed layer. Unfortunately, and disappointingly, apart from a few pieces of Saxon pottery, there was no evidence of rubbish pits, postholes, sunken-featured buildings, nor evidence of manufacturing in this part of the pub garden.

The search to find the nearby Saxon Hall still eludes us, but we know that it's likely to be nearby, and its discovery will have to wait for another time.

10. Acknowledgements

Our huge appreciation goes to Dave and Sue who run the Market Inn and who have shown continued interest and support since 2018.

Appendix 1: Harris Matrices



Appendix 2: Pottery Tables

KP193												
Context	Pre	Ro	EMS	MS	LS	EM	M	LM	PM	RED	LPM	Totals by Context (g)
02												200
03							5					5
Totals by Chronology		0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	205

KP194												
Context	Pre	Ro	EMS	MS	LS	EM	M	LM	PM	RED	LPM	Totals by Context (g)
02	30	3			3		75	28	12	536	172	974
03	17	7	67		13		68		36	38	22	268
04	2	3					3					8
05							1					1
Totals by Chronology	49	13	67	0	16	0	147	28	163	574	194	1251

Key to tables

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

Appendix 3: Lithics Table

KP194			
Context No.	Lithics Ref. No.	Type	Period
02	1867	Scraper tool	Neolithic
03	1866	Scraper tool	Late Neolithic / Early Bronze Age
04	1868	Blade	Mesolithic
04	1869	Flake tool	Not Established

Appendix 4: KP194 Small Finds



SF1



SF2



SF3



SF4



SF5



SF6



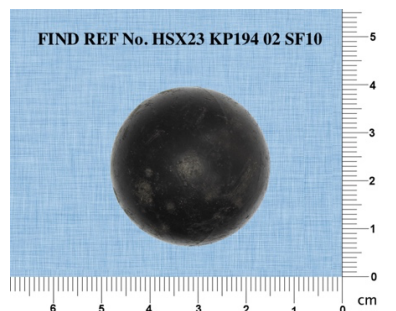
SF7



SF8



SF9



SF10



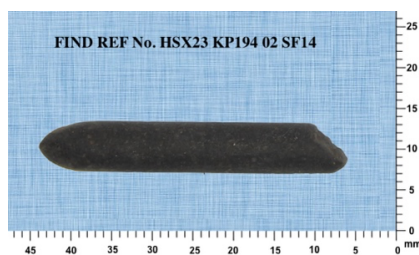
SF11



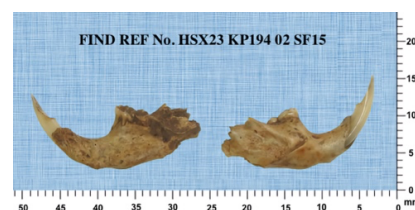
SF12



SF13



SF14



SF15



SF16



SF17

A brief description of KP194 Small Finds			
SF1	Decimal 1 pence coin - 2001	SF10	Plastic ball
SF2	Decimal 1 pence coin - 2011	SF11	Copper alloy button
SF3	Decimal 5 pence coin - 2002	SF12	0.3 Calibre bullet case
SF4	Lead sack / bale Seal	SF13	Tombac button
SF5	Lead sack / bale Seal	SF14	Slate stylus
SF6	Lead sack / bale Seal	SF15	Rat or mouse lower jaw
SF7	Brass door knob	SF16	Copper alloy stud
SF8	Curtain Track roller	SF17	Inscribed pottery (Market Inn) 1871-1874
SF9	Roofing washer		