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The Faversham Society  
Archaeological Research Group

Community  
Archaeology



## Hunt the Saxons 2017: Keyhole Pit KP159

10 Jacob Yard, off Preston Street, Faversham, Kent

Grid Reference: TR 601641 161246



**Fig 1: It's all go! From left to right: Maureen and Ron dealing with Finds, Keith, Pat and Jim checking the site notebook, Nigel and Lizzie sieving and talking to one of the waitresses, and Sheila in the depths digging. In the background is the handsome workshop that is now the Yard Café and to the right, the rear of a much-modified medieval property that fronts onto Preston Street.**

## 1. Introduction

This is an unusual type of site for FSARG. We usually dig in gardens, often part of long-settled plots in this ancient town. This plot, although nowadays enclosed and a courtyard for the Yard Café which is housed in the large building seen in **Fig 1**, had until around 1900 been open land on the edge of the built-up area. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was a laid-out garden but seemingly not attached to a house - see **Fig 4c: Map Regression**. When the large building was created around 1900 as a coffin making workshop for the highly reputable undertakers F & E Pordage<sup>1</sup>, this was very much a yard, not a garden. The map regression in **Fig 4** shows the marginal and then incorporated nature of this land clearly. We were interested in seeing if the archaeology of this plot differed significantly from that of the many gardens we have dug.

## 2. Geographical 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, GR TR 012354 62131. This plot lies at the rear of Preston Street properties at the north end of Preston Street at an elevation of around 11m.

### b) Geology

The excavation is in an area of relatively recent brick earth deposits about 2m deep, sitting on top of the Upper Chalk which is dipping northwards. The valleys of the Westbrook and Cooksditch are floored with alluvium, showing up clearly in the geological map below.

**Fig 2: Solid and Drift Geology of the Faversham area.<sup>2</sup>**



The location of KP159 is shown by a star ☆

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

### c) Known historical background

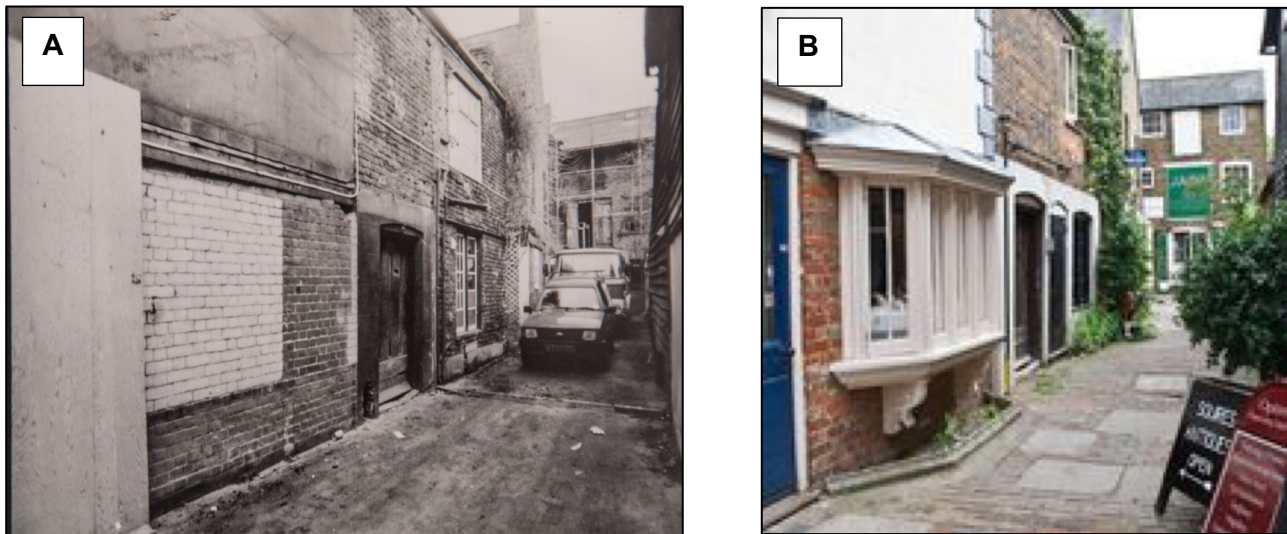
The general development of this site has already been outlined in the introduction. Although seemingly marginal through its known history, it does lie between the Gatefield-Cross Lane axis and the parallel Market Street-West Street axis. Finds over the last 15 years have led us to see this zone as the most important part of Faversham during the early to late medieval period. In excavations close to this location

<sup>1</sup> John Owen pers.comm.

<sup>2</sup> British Geological Survey Faversham England and Wales sheet 273 Solid and Drift Edition. 1:50000.



we have found evidence for Mid Anglo-Saxon settlement<sup>3</sup> as well as later medieval<sup>4</sup>. In relation to more modern times, we have found nearby evidence for the impact of the enormous gunpowder explosion that ravaged the town in 1781<sup>5</sup> and also for the 1944 nearby bombing of the site at the junction of East Street and Newton Road.<sup>6</sup> The more recent changes are also drastic and are shown very well in **Fig 3**.<sup>7</sup>



**Fig 3: A: 1960s B: 2010**

The contrast between these two photographs of exactly the same place is astonishing and shows beautifully the progress Faversham has made over the last 50 years. Derelict and decaying buildings have been preserved and rejuvenated with attention to their character and the roadway itself has been restored. The uses are commercial rather than residential and add to the town's attractions. The workshop became a restaurant called Jadz and in 2015 it became the popular Yard Café.

**Fig 4: Map Regression for Jacob Yard location. The site of KP159 is shown by a yellow star.**



**a) Jacobs' map of 1774**

The scale of this map is too small to distinguish separate buildings but Gatefield Lane and Preston Street are easy to identify. The wiggly vertical lines represent hop poles. The buildings mostly line the roads. Only the Vaults has a recognisable layout along Preston St. The Alexander Centre has yet to be built.

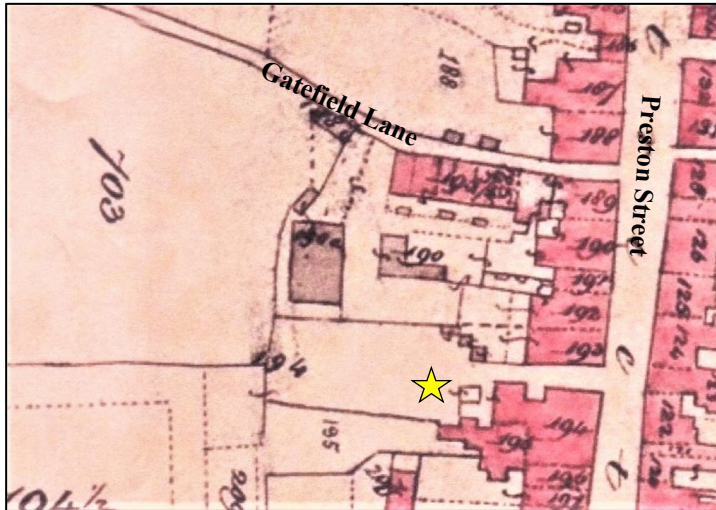
<sup>3</sup> [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org) KP156.

<sup>4</sup> Op.cit. KP178.

<sup>5</sup> Op.cit. KP151/151A.

<sup>6</sup> Op.cit. KP156.

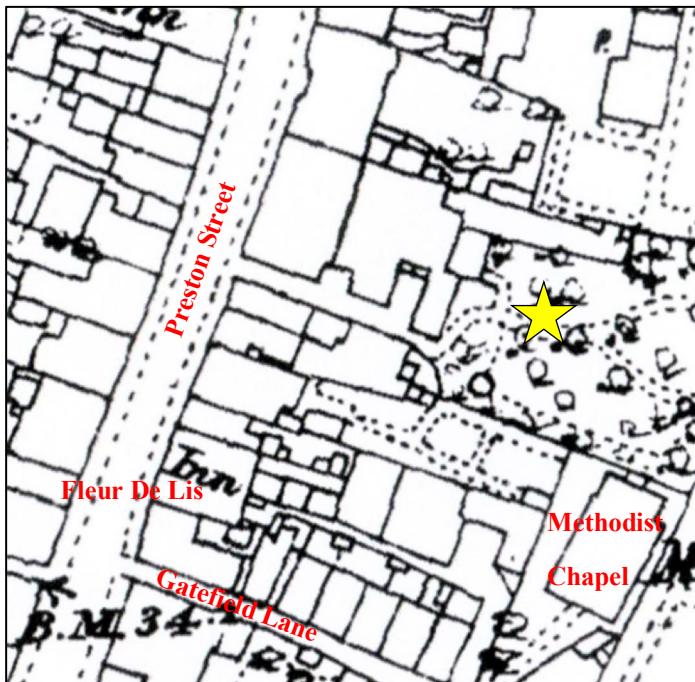
<sup>7</sup> Banaigs, N (ed) *Time Passes: the Changing Face of Faversham* Kent Creative Arts CIC No36.



### b) 1842 tithe map

In this map, north is towards the bottom of the map, whereas in all the other maps north is towards the top. The numbers on each property or space give details of owners, residents and uses of the land – an invaluable resource. The table below gives the details for our area of interest.

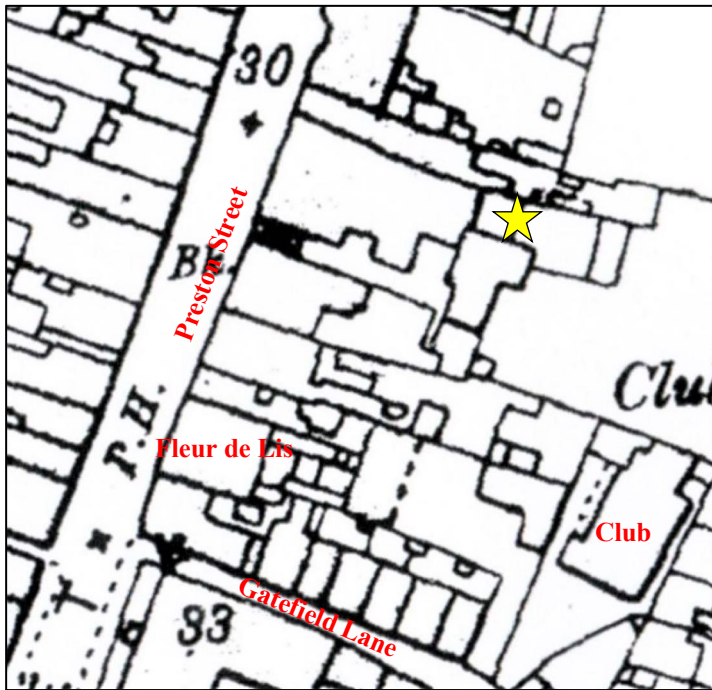
Map number	Owner	Resident	Uses
189	Isaac Kemp	George Kemp & others	House and buildings
190	Rigdens	Fleur de Lis	Public House
190a	Baptist Chapel		Church
191	John Coulter	Thomas Lewis & another	House and garden
192	Charles Clay	Himself	House, shop and garden
193	Charles Lawson	George Colegate	House and garden
194	Henry Wright	William Hoare	House, yard and garden
195	Elizabeth Perkins	John Smith	House and garden
195a	Isaac Kemp	George Kemp & others	Six cottages
196	Elizabeth Perkins	John Smith	House and garden
703	Elizabeth Simpson	herself	garden



### c) OS map 1871

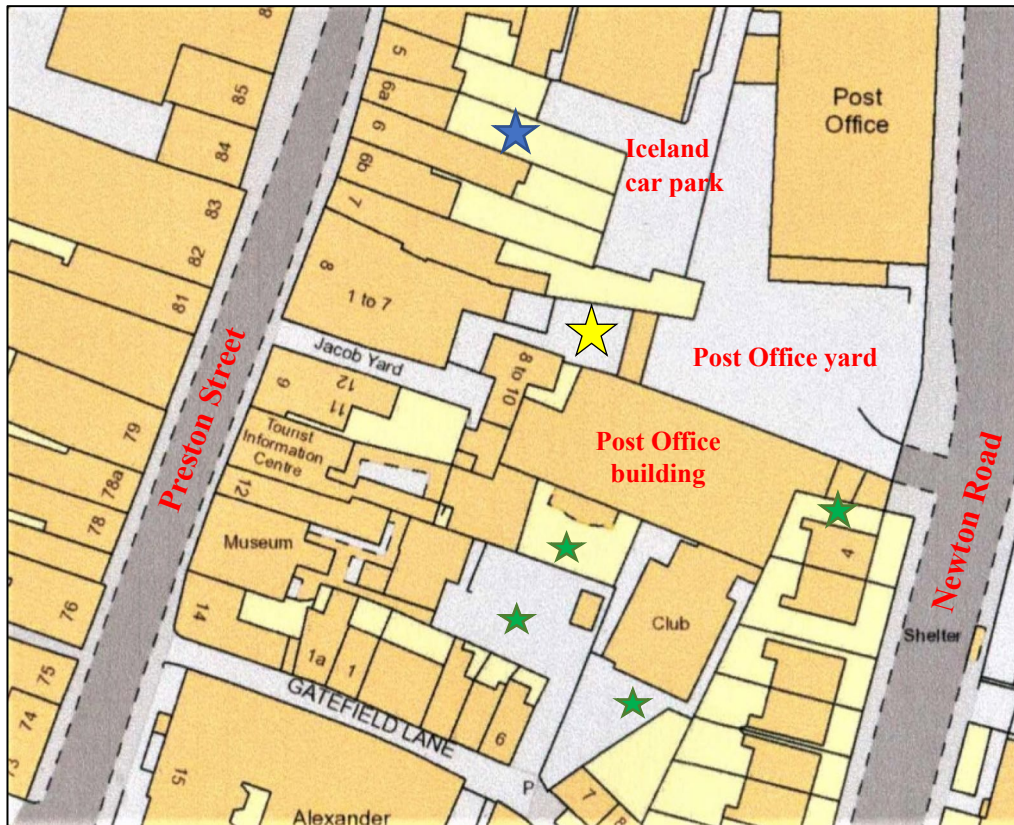
The area in which KP159 is sited is an ornamental garden at this time, with an entrance from Preston Street. The Baptist Chapel has now become a Methodist Chapel. The buildings in the area have not changed much since 1842. The Fleur de Lis occupies the same location but has acquired stables at the rear.





#### d) OS map 1910

The land on which KP159 lies is still open at this stage but its use is not defined. The entry to the rear of the properties has become blocked by a conservatory at the street end and a new building further in. This building is owned by Pordage undertakers, and was a coffin making workshop. The Methodist Chapel has become a Club. The Fleur de Lis continues to flourish. A narrow separate plot has appeared between the two larger properties in the mid- northern part of the map.



#### e) OS map c 2010

This shows the layout at the time of writing except that No 12 has now become part of the Fleur de Lis Museum. The entry via Jacob Yard to the rear has re-opened by this stage, around a hundred years later than in **d)** above, but little else has changed on the Preston Street side. On the eastern side, however, Newton Road has appeared. The Post Office which included a sorting office and distribution centre, is occupying a large area: this area was cleared in 1944 by bombing and the Post Office complex was built in 1954.

The blue star ★ shows the location of KP151/151A, also excavated in 2017 and whose results link in interesting ways with those of KP159. The green stars ★ show other archaeological interventions in this area.

### 3. Location of KP159

The choice of location was simplified by the absence of any features in the yard other than the neatly raked gravel surface throughout. The excavation was located in the centre of the east-west axis and sufficiently towards the northern boundary to be out of the way of the entry path.

### 4. The procedures

A 2m by 0.8m was pegged out using the planning square and the area delineated marked with string. The position of the rectangle was recorded by measuring to mapped corners of the property. No turf removal was necessary. The pit was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which was fully recorded. The keyhole was excavated to the maximum safety depth of 1.2m. Most contexts were sieved for one bucket per five filled, with larger inclusions set aside for all buckets. Finds were set aside for each context and special finds were given three dimensional coordinates, where possible, to pinpoint the exact find spot. Any features revealed were carefully recorded and sections drawn for the longways trench walls towards the end of excavation. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the gravel replaced.

### 5. The findings

The imported gravel layer at the surface was resting on fragmented terram, at a depth or around 11cm. This layer was removed without finds retention, and labelled context [1]. The layer beneath was the same across the pit and was fine-grained, well-sorted garden soil, labelled context [2]. At around 20cm below the surface the soil became a firmer and lighter layer with fewer finds, still across the whole pit, labelled context [3]. When this layer at a depth of around 40cm down started to contain markedly greater amount of building materials (brick and tile) the context number became [4].

From [4] downwards, the excavation became more complex. At the south east end of the pit a conspicuous lens of white plaster was revealed at a depth of around 50cm, with another smaller lens at the north west end, see **Fig 6a**. When the north west end lens was removed, a layer of what was at first identified as tiles emerged, seemingly arranged on a level to form a surface resting on a bed containing many small pebbles and flints. Later inspection of the red-orange ceramic pieces, however, identified these pieces as sherds almost certainly from a single huge vessel. This will be further discussed in the interpretation section (6). The location of [5] can be seen in the section **Fig 8b** as can the large white plaster lens at the other end of the trench.

[5] was resting on top of another whole-pit layer context [6]. [6] contained much less dumped ceramic building material (CBM: bricks and tiles) than [4] and was a firm, yellowy-brown, fine-grained deposit with small flecks of chalk. At around 65cm down differences between the east and west end of the pit became more marked so each of the two ends were given separate context numbers, [7] for the west end and [8] for the east end. The boundary between the two was indistinct and did not seem to represent a cut. [7] was yellowy brown with a high CBM content, especially of peg tiles. [8] was darker in colour and contained less CBM and pottery, although the types were similar. Quite soon, however, strikingly different deposits were uncovered at the north west and north east ends – these can very clearly be seen in the photograph **Fig 6** and in the sections **Fig 8a & b**.





**Fig 5: The broken pot**

Feature [5] is clearly seen here across the top left-hand side of the pit, at a depth of 50cm. The white mortar that partly overlay [5] can be seen in the side of the pit. The edge to this deposit is so sharp that it is not surprising that at first this was identified a pathway. The pottery weighed just over 2kg.



**Fig 6: a) the whole pit viewed at the end of excavation b) closeup of feature [9].**  
The tops of the photographs are the northwest end of the pit.



The east end deposit, at around 85cm down and labelled masonry deposit [10] was made up of pebbles and small flints, spread evenly across. The north west end deposit [9] at around 75cm down, was much more substantial, being built up from large blocks of stone and large minimally shaped flints, also peg tile and red and yellow brick as can be seen in the closeup **Fig 6b**.

As can be seen in **Fig 6a** and **Fig 8c/d**, the zone between these two features was excavated downwards to a total depth of 1.4m. This cavity was interpreted as a pit whose deliberate creation cut through the pebble feature (a courtyard surface?) and the stone and brick feature (a crude wall running north west to southeast? Or perhaps simply a dump onto the courtyard surface?) and was given the cut context number [11]. Its fill was not excavated separately so was labelled as the lower part of the [7] / [8] layer: it is labelled [7 / 8a] in the Harris Matrix (**Appendix 1**). The sides of the pit are a dark soil with small chalk flecks and no visible artefactual content and it is possible that this is an earlier field deposit. At the very bottom the characteristic orangey-brown colour with no chalk flecks almost certainly identifies this as natural brickearth. Excavation stopped at this point.

The most common date by far for the finds, ranging from pottery to CBM to Small Finds, was Post Medieval. The bricks and a floor tile found in [8] were later 18<sup>th</sup> century, with soft yellow brick that was certainly not Kentish Stock bricks (produced in great volume locally in Early Modern times).



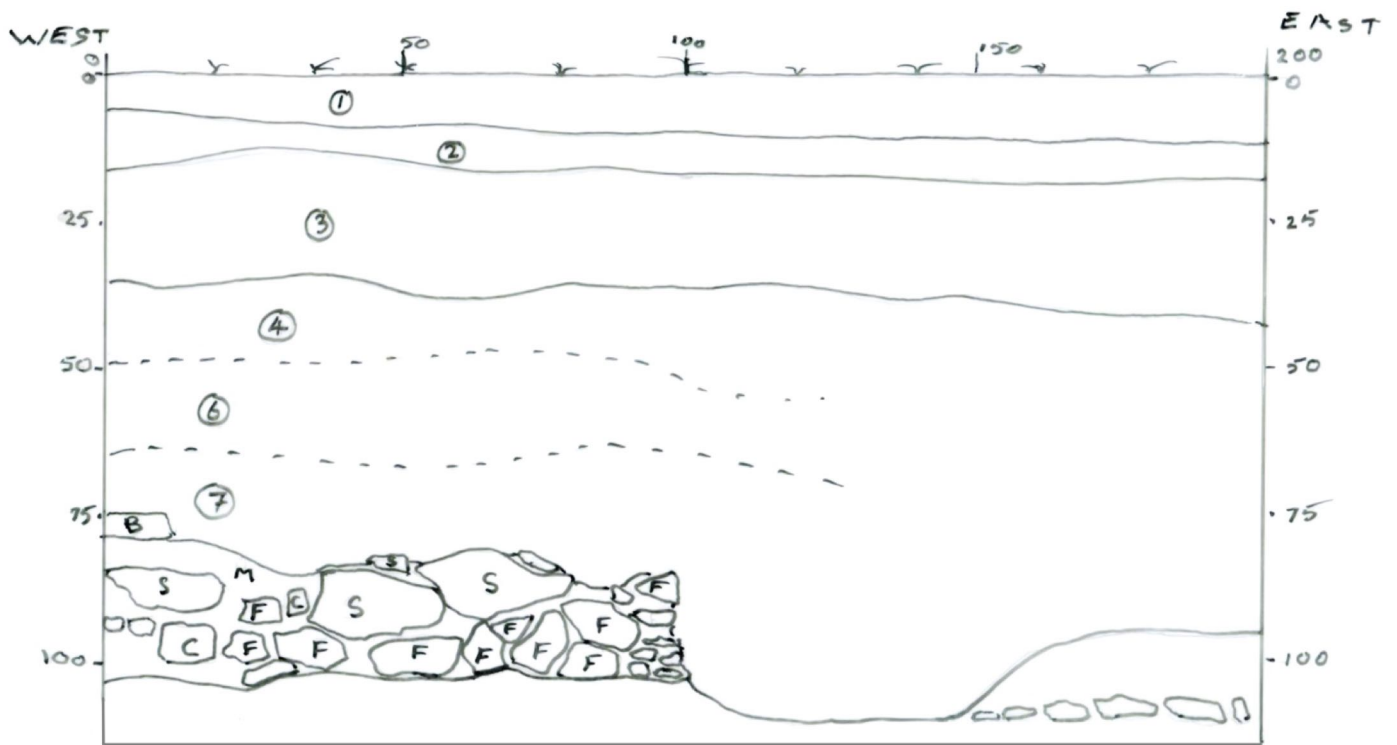
**Fig 7: Floor tile and brick**

The red floor tile fragment and the soft yellow brick were found in context [8].

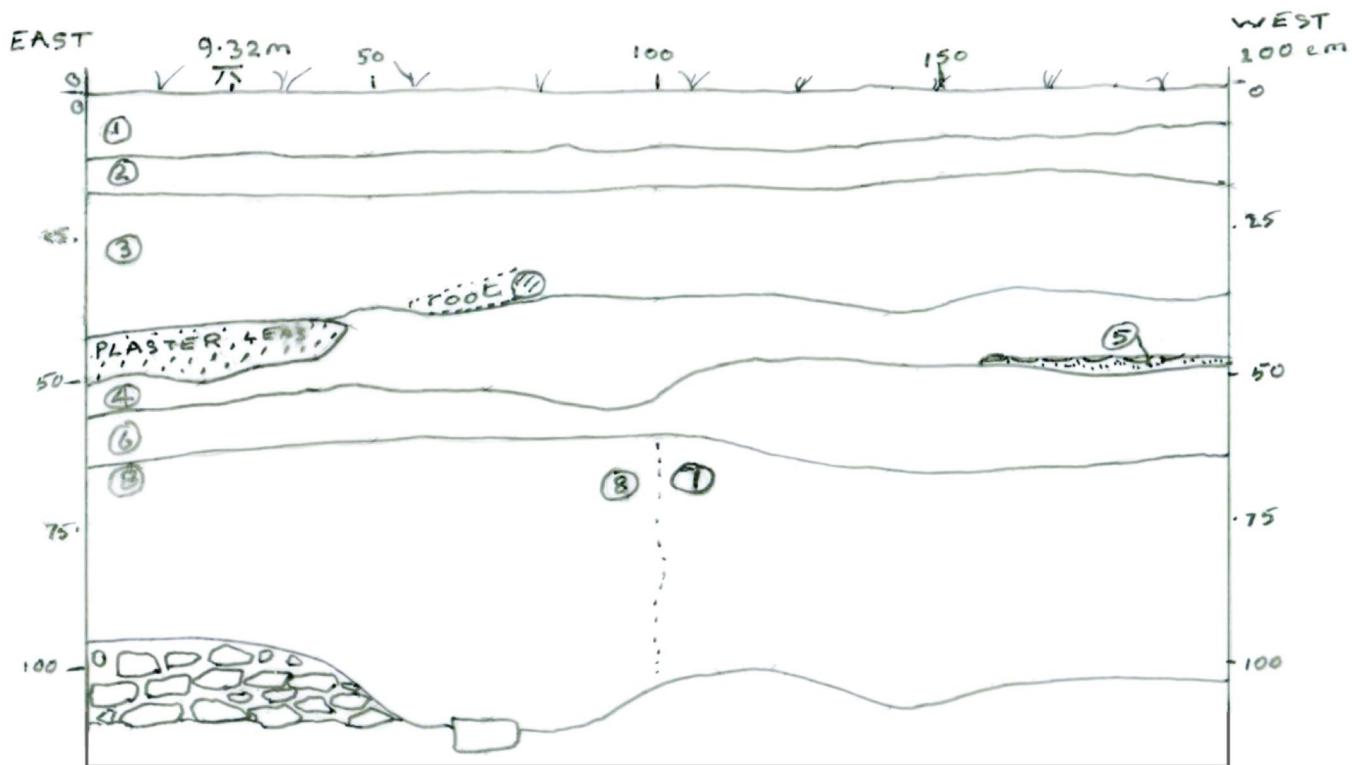
Apart from the single pot assemblage in [5] the largest amount of post medieval (PM) pottery was found in [6] which is the layer immediately below and adjacent to [5], and then [7] / [8] which was immediately below [6]. Between them, the assemblage included Midland Black, Midland Yellow, Wedgewood jasper, slipware, tin glaze, Wedgewood salt glaze and cream ware as well as somewhat earlier Bellarmine stoneware. The inclusion of many expensive luxury pottery products in this assemblage in such a marginal area (check the tithe map **Fig 4b** to confirm this for the earlier years) is very intriguing and will be returned to in the Interpretation section - see **Appendix 2** for an overall pottery chronology for this pit and to **Appendix 5** for a detailed catalogue of the Post Medieval pottery.



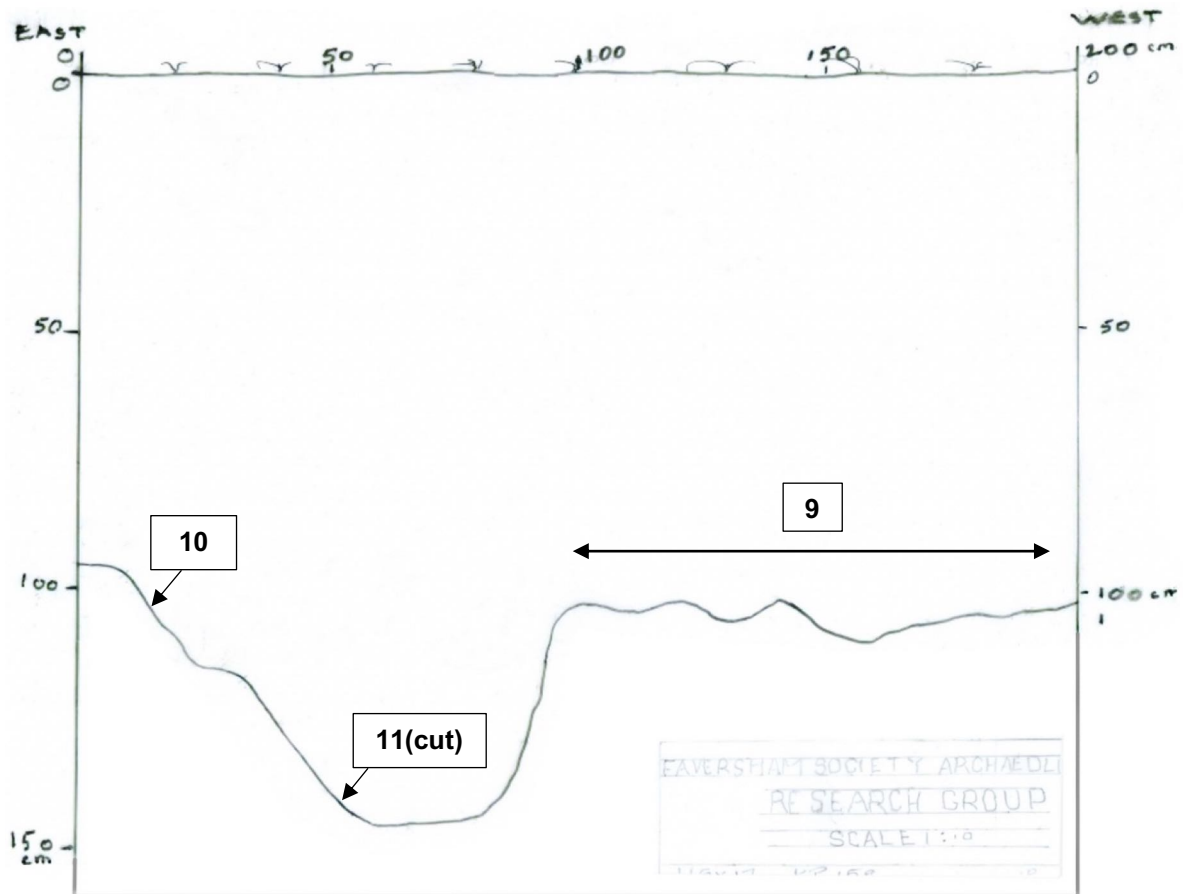
Fig 8: Section drawings



a) drawing of the North face of the trench at the end of excavation. The masonry letters stand for B: brick, S: stone, F: flint C: chalk. The masonry context is [9].



b) Section drawing of the South face of the trench at the end of excavation. The masonry context [10] is small flint pebbles.



c) Section east to west along the midpoint of the trench. The deep pit between the two masonry contexts is clear, with a depth of nearly 50cm.



d) A close-up of Pit [11], showing what could be natural brickearth at the bottom. Note that this photo faces the north wall whereas (c) is facing the south wall.



All layer / fill contexts yielded small quantities of shells (mostly oyster and winkles) and small pieces of animal bone.

Small Finds are fully described in **Appendix 4**. Only three were found, all of them dated to the Post Medieval period, probably the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were a bone gaming counter, a glass bead and a copper alloy button.

## 6. Interpretation

This is a pit which has more debris than is usual in garden pits. With the upper layer [2] the pottery is all Early Modern in date and can be seen as dating from the period when the area had been turned into a garden (later 19<sup>th</sup> century) or after the workshop had been built (early 20<sup>th</sup> century). From there on down, however, from [5] downwards the pottery is overwhelmingly 18<sup>th</sup> century in date, as are the Small Finds and brick and tile.

One startling fact, though, is that the range of expensive and 'posh' pottery found mainly in [7] and [8] corresponds remarkably closely with the range from an enormous deposit found a short distance away in the garden of Furlongs – see the modern map in **Fig 4e** for a blue star showing the location of the Furlong excavation KP151/151A. The full report of this can be found on the FSARG website [www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org](http://www.favershamcommunityarchaeology.org). It was dug in the same year as KP159 and was only about 100m away. The explanation of the extraordinary KP151 deposit was traced to the massive gunpowder explosion of 1781 at the Royal Ordnance Works at Stonebridge Ponds, mentioned on page 3 of this report, and the effect of this explosion on the glass and china shop of Sarah Collier, which was on what is now the Furlongs site at 6a Preston Street.

We were aware that the KP151/151A deposit crammed with luxury pottery, wine bottles, expensive clothing accessories as well as everyday items such as shells and animal bones extended well beyond the limits of our little KP151/151A, but for it to extend as far as this seems unlikely. It seems more possible that the debris at the time spread beyond the high brick wall that still encloses Number 6's garden – indeed that wall may not have existed in 1781 and was built so that an extra 1m of imported soil could be dumped on top of and mask the debris close to the damaged shop. Material that was in the area beyond the wall may, during the levelling operation that created what became the Iceland car park, have been shoved into the land further south so it became mixed in with earlier pottery.

Seven tentative phases to the KP159 deposit accumulation are suggested:

**Phase 1: pre 1781** Contexts [12], [10]. This is the courtyard surface [10] underlain by [12] and possibly by a natural layer as yet undesignated which would have an earlier phase number.

**Phase 2: 1781 event:** context [9]. This could have been a wall damaged by the 1781 explosion and roughly repaired or a heap of debris cleared from Sarah Collier's garden and ending up here.

**Phase 3: 1781 - c1850** contexts [7], [8] Gradual makeup of land covering up the debris

**Phase 4: 1850 - 1900** contexts [6], [5], [4], [3]. On the 1871 map **Fig 4c** the whole area here is shown as a laid-out garden, which is why the strewn broken pot was initially thought to be a pathway. Maybe it was simply a huge plant pot that fell off a wheelbarrow?

**Phase 5: 1900 - c ??** [2] Courtyard of workshop.

**Phase 6: ??? - 2009** Derelict. No surviving contexts.

**Phase 7: 2009 onwards** Context [1] Restoration of property and use as restaurant. Gravelled surface for open air dining facility.

## 6. Final comments

This was a complex pit, the kind with multiple small deposits of different character – spadeful / barrowful / bucketful – and without much of the mixing and turning over of soil that characterises farmed areas and gardens. This made it all the more intriguing, but if every ‘event’ had been given its own context number (as is the rule for context assignment: a ‘context’ is the imprint of an event in the ground) we would have had at least a hundred contexts in this pit! Instead we have seen features such as the lens of white plaster in context [4] as part of the broader context of the disposal of debris from the 1781 explosion. Needless to say, we would love to do some further excavation in this tucked away area behind Preston Street / Market Street.

## 7. Acknowledgments

Great thanks to Ellie, the owner of the Yard Café, and her staff who supported us through this excavation – **Fig 9** shows Ellie ceremonially laying the first spadeful of backfill for KP159. We are also grateful to John Owen for helping with the history of the workshop and Natalie Banaigs and Robin Warren for permission to use that striking pair of photographs of Jacob Yard. Also heartfelt thanks to Caroline Clarkstone and her team for the very professional excavation and first-class record keeping that included section drawing and superb photography.

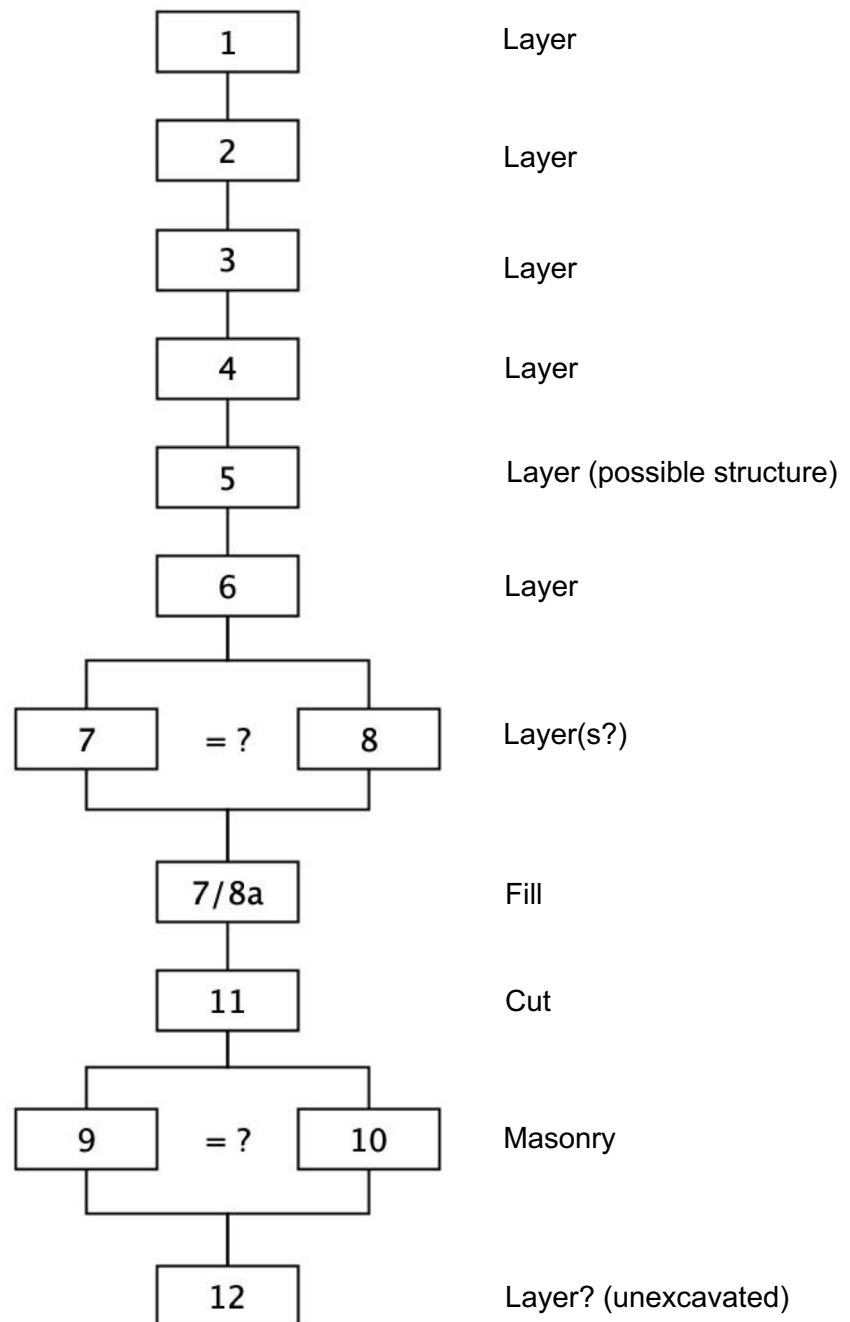


**Fig 9:**

Ellie launches the backfilling. Sheila, Pat, Ron and Jim look on.



## Appendix 1: Harris Matrix for KP159



## Appendix 2: Pottery Chronology for KP159 (see also Appendix 5)

(Weights in grams)

CAT code	Dates AD	Contexts								Total
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8 / 8a	9	
Pre	Pre 43									0
Rom	43 - 410						3			3
EMS	410 - 700									0
MLS	700 - 850									0
LS	850 - 1050									0
EM	1050 - 1225									0
HM	1225 - 1400				9			3	6	18
LM	1400 - 1550		12				86	109	2	209
PM	1550 - 1800				2276	29	199	107		2611
PM / EM redware	1550 - 1900	27		32		364	300	177	24	924
EM	1800 - now	211	268	188	10		29			706
Uni	any							18		18
Totals		238	280	220	2295	393	617	414	32	4489

### Comments

Context 5: nearly all sherds from 1 large vessel – see **Fig 5**. 1 sherd Tyler Hill.

Context 6: tin glaze, stoneware.

Context 7: Midland black, Midland yellow, Wedgewood jasper, slipware, redware -1 glazed piece.

Context 8: slipware, stoneware e.g. Bellarmine & Westerwald, salt glaze, creamware.

Context 9: 1 sherd Borderware, 1 sherd Late Tyler Hill, 1 sherd Canterbury Sandyware.



### Appendix 3: Lithics

Catalogue No.	Context	Type	Qualifier 1	Subtype	Earliest Date	Latest Date	Period
1029	7	piercer/ borer	crude though effective	notched tool	LBA	LBA	BA
1030	7	point			M	M	M
1031	6	scraper	end		N	N	N
1032	9	burin	small	microlith	MM	LM	M
1033	8	point	chert?		M	M	M
1034	8	arrowhead	triangular, no tang		M	M	M
1035	7	utilised flake	large		EN	EN	N
1036	3	rod			M	M	M
1037	8	arrowhead	Horsham		M	M	M
1038	2	spall			X	X	X
1039	7	burin	crude		LBA	EIA	IA
1051	8	scraper	side	burin, notched	LBA	LBA	BA

M: Mesolithic

N: Neolithic

BA: Bronze Age

IA: Iron Age

### Appendix 4: Small Finds

SF No.	Context	Simple Name	Material	Weight (g)	Description	Dimensions	Earliest Date	Latest Date
32	6	Counter / gaming piece	Bone	0.6	A small bone counter with a crudely made central hole and a design of parallel lines on one side.	2cm diameter	1550	1800
33	6	Bead, embedded in debris	Glass	11.7 (all)	A multifaceted iridescent blue and green bead with a central hole. The facets are irregular. The bead is fused to corroded iron and plastic lump.	0.8cm diameter bead	1550	1800
34	7	Button	Copper Alloy	6.7	This button has a chamfered edge and a recess at the back. A copper alloy circular shank has been soldered on. The shank has 8 slots cut into it.	2.46cm dia. 0.3cm thick. 1.3cm front to end of shank.	1550	1800



## Appendix 5: Detailed listing of the types of Post Medieval pottery from KP159

Pottery type	Context 06		Context 07		Context 08		Context 09		Totals	
Quantities	weight (g)	sherd count	weight (g)	sherd count	weight (g)	sherd count	weight (g)	sherd count	weight (g)	sherd count
Tin glaze	12	5	65	20	26	14	0	0	103	39
Creamware (Wedgewood)	8	6	1	2	2	2	0	0	11	10
Salt glazed (Wedgewood)	1	1	47	11	40	12	0	0	88	24
Slipware	1	1	0	0	5	2	0	0	6	3
Bellarmine	1	1	22	3	14	4	0	0	37	8
Jasper (Wedgewood)	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	4	1
Westerwald stoneware	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	1
Midland Black	0	0	45	6	0	0	0	0	45	6
Midland Yellow	0	0	7	1	1	1	0	0	8	2
Debased Scratch blue	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pale grey stoneware	6	1	5	2	11	1	0	0	22	4
Redware - no glaze	320	11	28	2	23	8	6	1	377	22
Redware - dark glaze	12	3	68	8	31	10	0	0	111	21
Redware mid brown glaze	29	4	52	3	51	13	0	0	132	20
Redware yellowy glaze	0	0	82	5	22	4	0	0	104	9
Thick pieces no glaze	0	0	65	2	47	1	0	0	112	3
Border ware	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	1	19	1
Totals	390	33	494	68	273	72	25	2	1182	181

When compared to the Preliminary Pottery Catalogue in Appendix 3 of the Report for KP151/151A , it can be seen that although the quantities in KP159 are tiny compared with those of KP151/151A, the range of Post Medieval types is very similar. Only the Chinese porcelain and Whielden's tortoiseshell ware is missing. Perhaps these pots were from nearby property where a well-off householder who had shopped at Sarah Collier's store at 6, Preston Street, also lost her ceramics to the 1781 explosion? There must surely be a link!

### Samples of late 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery from KP159.



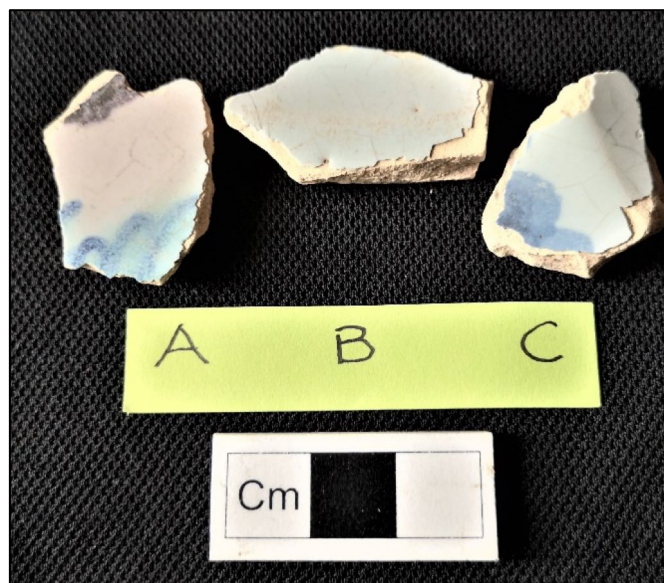
Above **a)**: salt glazed stoneware made by Wedgwood at Etruria, Stoke on Trent. A very early relatively mass-produced quality ware with a seed pattern on the rim.



Above **b)**: slipware, frequently found in Faversham. See Report on KP101 page 19 for an identical find.



Above **c)**: three different types of stoneware, probably imported from Northern Europe.



Above **d)**: Tin glaze, a type of pottery revolutionary and very popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but on the brink of disappearing in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, out-classed by the new pottery types coming from Stoke on Trent.