



Understanding Ospringe

Report for Keyhole 50 Lion Lodge, Ospringe Street, Faversham, Kent Grid Reference: TR 00205 60869

1. Introduction

Lion Lodge is situated towards the west end of Ospringe and on the south side of Ospringe Street (A2). The house dates from 1760 and its construction is colour-washed stucco walls with a half-hipped tiled roof. ¹



Fig 1a: Aerial view of Lion Lodge²

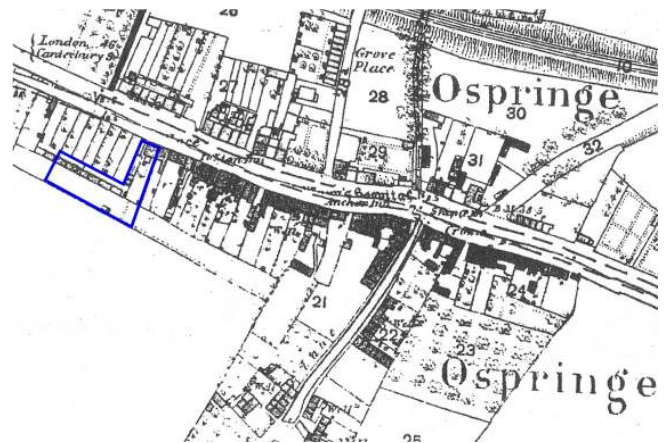


Fig 1b: Location shown on map of 1865³

2. Location of keyhole pit

The rear garden of Lion Lodge is a large L-shape, very picturesque, open plan and lay mainly to lawn, with flower beds, shrubs and trees (see Fig 1a and Fig 2).

The large size of the garden provided many options for the location of the pit. However, the final position was determined by a feature that was discovered in another keyhole pit a few days earlier (see K44). It was therefore decided to see whether there was any correlation between the two. The exact position was measured and recorded with reference to the property.

¹ Swale Borough Council c 1990 *Townscape Survey: Ospringe Village*

² Google Earth

³ OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2500



Fig 2: The location of K50 within the picturesque garden.

3. The Procedures

A one metre square was pegged out and the area delineated marked with string. The position of the square was recorded by measuring to mapped corners of the house. Turf was removed carefully from the area, rolled and set aside in plastic bags. The pit was then excavated using single context methods i.e. deposits were removed in reverse chronological order to the events which created them. Finds were set aside for each context with Small Finds given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Most of the excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap scanned using a metal detector. For some layer contexts, *sample* sieving / cursory sorting took precedence over the 100% recovery methods. Photographs were taken, and any special features recorded. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered, and the turf replaced.

4. The findings

From our experiences of dealing with town occupation sites, together with the usual time constraints, it was decided that we would not sieve context [01], but to perform a cursory sort of the soil, removing it with a fork and shovel. This first context extended to a depth of 60cm and was composed of strongly cemented light brown, well sorted soil. The bulk material consisted of CBM (ceramic building material): 3.3kg, mortar and plaster: 720g, flints: 45g. Of the pottery found (274g), nearly 75% was either post medieval or late post medieval, 11% was medieval, 11% was Roman, and the remainder unidentifiable. There was also a quantity of iron, bone (cattle, pig, and bird) – with butchery marks evident on a number of pieces, and shell.

During the removal of this first context, at a depth of 30cm, a small shallow irregular shaped demolition pit (20cm deep) became evident in the southern corner (contexts [02] & [03]) – see Fig.3. The contents of which consisted mainly of mortar, plaster, CBM and flints, together with shell, iron and coal. There was a very small amount of pottery (seven pieces) dating from Roman to late post medieval.



Fig 3: South-west view of the pit showing the extent of [01], the 3 excavated postholes, and (top left) the edge of the demolition pit [02] & [03].

The next context [04] was a very light brown, strongly cemented, thin and irregular (2cm – 5cm thick) layer composed of CBM, flint, mortar and plaster. In addition, there was a small quantity of iron and pottery, with a few fragments of shell, bone, coal and glass. Of the pottery, there was one thick piece of Roman grog tempered ware, together with 5 other shards of post, or late post medieval pottery.

The 3 postholes (see Fig. 3) were recorded as contexts [05] & [06], [07] & [08], and [09] & [10] (2 contexts are given for each – one for the ‘cut’ and one for the ‘fill’). The first [05] & [06] shown top left in Fig 3 was 13cm x 20cm, shallow in depth, and contained a small quantity of flint, CBM and plaster, together with a single shard of late post medieval pottery and a small bone fragment. The second [07] & [08] shown at the bottom in Fig 3 was 7cm x 8cm (poorly defined) and shallow. It contained a very small quantity of CBM, iron, coal and a single bone fragment. The third [09] & [10] shown top right in Fig 3 was 7cm x 18cm in size, shallow depth. It contained a very small quantity of mortar, flint, and bone.

The next layer [11] was made up of medium / dark brown, compact, well sorted soil. The composition included CBM, flints, mortar and plaster, chalk, pottery, bone, iron, shell and slag. Of the considerable amount of pottery - some 466g (around 150 shards) – there were quantities of medieval (36%), Roman (24%), Prehistoric (6%), Saxon (3%) with the remainder consisting of late post medieval (3%) and unidentified (28%). A proportion of the unidentified is almost certainly prehistoric, and all of which is almost certainly pre-medieval. Figs 4 and 5 show the early pottery. There were some 73 pieces of animal bone although it was only possible to identify 3 pieces (cattle and dog) due to the degree of fragmentation. Some pieces had butchery, cutting and gnawing marks.

The layer was excavated by removing and sieving a slot 40cm wide to a depth of 40cm. The remaining 60cm width was quickly removed with a spade and a rough hand sort was carried out. This allowed us to progress deeper within our time constraints. Context 11 extended to a depth of 0.94m below ground level to the west side, and to a depth of 0.78m to the east side, with the new context 12 sloping up from east to west.



Fig 4: Medieval pottery from [11]



Fig 5: Roman, prehistoric and Saxon pottery from [11]

[12] was excavated down to a depth of 1.1m (below ground level) along the west half of the pit only. Although this wasn't the extent of the layers' depth, time prevented any further excavation. From the small quantities of materials found (which included flint, CBM, bone and shell), there were 3 shards of Roman pottery, a single medieval piece and several small unidentifiable fragments.

Finally, a small (10cm x 22cm) pit [13] & [14] was discovered at the northern most corner of the keyhole pit. It was fully excavated (23cm depth). The contents consisted of 3 pieces of bone, and a piece of shell.

The relationship between the contexts is shown in the Harris matrix (Fig 6).

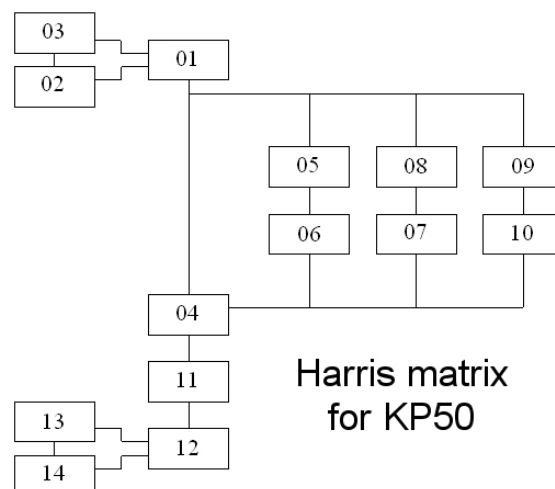


Fig 6: Harris matrix showing the context relationships.

5. Interpretation.

It is interesting that this keyhole pit (and others this season) provides quite a contrast to those in the heart of Faversham with respect to the 'usual' high level of ash content. This keyhole pit produced almost no household fire-related waste – just 75g of coal. This may have been due to the size of the garden (large) compared with those encountered in town, and ash may have been distributed elsewhere.

Where contextual excavation is used, it should be fairly straightforward to interpret the layers by the dating material found, and so determine the different phases of use. In this case, it is quite apparent that there has been a great deal of disturbance throughout the 1.1m depth. A good example is the fact that Roman pottery was found in the very first context and late post medieval pottery found in [11]. Leaving the small pits and post holes to one side;

[01] has a predominance of late post medieval material

[04] has a predominance of Roman material

[11] has a predominance of medieval material

But clearly, you cannot have a later period below an earlier one – unless there has been a considerable degree of churning (which looks to be the case).

What *is* clear from the pottery found is that there is a distinct lack of material from early-mid Saxon through to the early medieval period (410AD – 1225AD), and again, very little from the late medieval to post medieval period (1400AD – 1800AD). This too, is in stark contrast to the pits excavated in the town. It's therefore reasonable to assume that during these periods, this area was less active for some reason.

6. Final comments

This was a very interesting pit to excavate, and proved quite different to those excavated during the *Hunt the Saxon* seasons⁴. It was also nice to be straight in to archaeology as soon as we started – in town we would have had to excavate around 0.5m before we got to the same point.

As usual our old enemy (time) prevented us from excavating further. This meant that we were unable to see if what was thought to be a Roman road found a short distance away at K44 continued its route through this property parallel to Ospringe Street.

7. Acknowledgments

Great thanks to our hosts Mr and Mrs Marshall for allowing us to 'intrude' into their lovely garden and also to extend the excavation time beyond what was originally agreed. We must also thank them for their hospitality and regular refreshments provided!

Mike Tillman, Supervisor

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⁴ See www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/HunttheSaxons
FSARG/OSP08/K50