



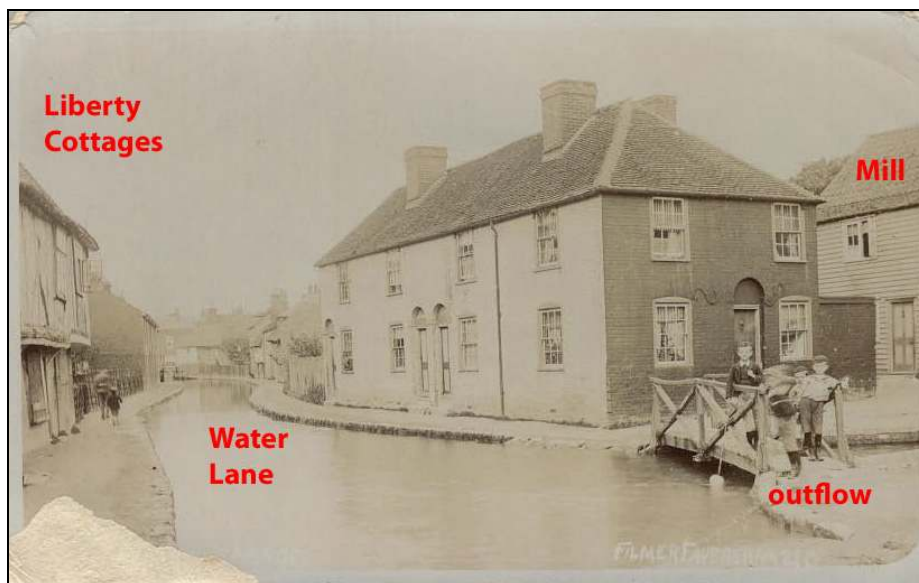
Understanding Ospringe

Report for Keyhole 53 41 Water Lane, Ospringe Grid Reference TR 003250 607750

1. Introduction

Number 41 Water Lane is situated on the eastern side of the Lane towards the northern end, approximately 100m south of the junction with the A2. The property is a bungalow built in the 1960s with a rear conservatory extension. Figs 1 and 2 show the property is on the site of a corn mill and associated structures.

Fig 1: The Mill around 1900¹



Site surveying and comparisons with the map of 1865 (see below) indicated that the garden would have been part of the mill pond. The mill buildings may have impinged on part of the northern boundary of the garden but would be mainly within the area now occupied by garages and their access routes to the north of number 41. The Westbrook stream which filled the mill pond and flowed out down Water Lane was diverted into a culvert in the 1960s.

¹ Photograph from archive at the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, Faversham, Kent
FSARG/OSP08/K53

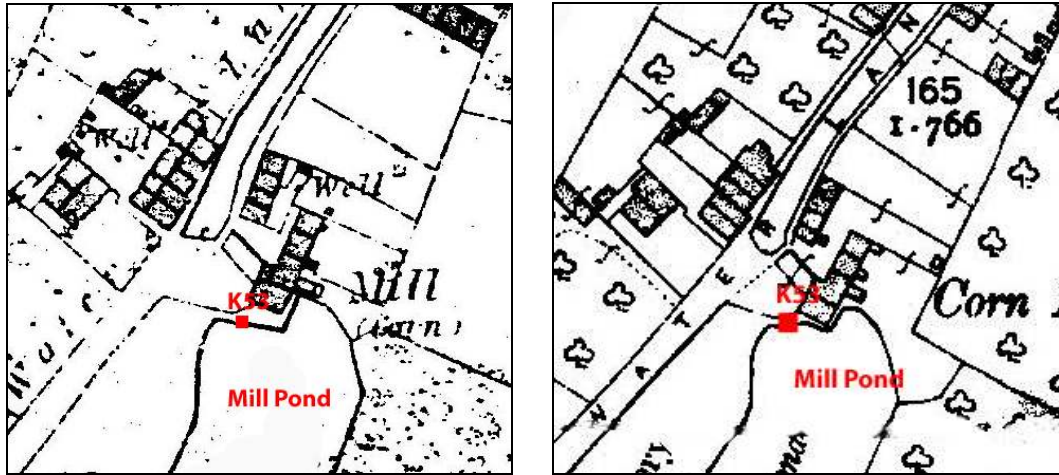


Fig 2 a) Location of K53 in 1865²

b) Location in 1907³

2. Location of pit

The pit was sited on a lawn to the rear of the property. The ground rises very gently to the east in this garden, before rising very steeply beyond the garden boundary. The pit location was chosen to avoid tree roots and also to avoid the culvert carrying the West Brook. The culvert route was marked with a manhole cover and was confirmed using a quick geo resistivity survey.

3. The procedures

A one metre square was pegged out using the planning square 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 square, rolled and set aside in plastic bags. 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 1.2 metres. All excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap scanned using a metal detector. Finds were set aside for each context and special finds were given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Any features revealed were carefully recorded. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the turf replaced.

4. The findings

In all, ten contexts were identified in this pit, with finds including pottery, shell, bone, iron and glass.

The top layer, [01], was mainly brown clay with small amounts of chalk. The soils in this first context continued in context [03] with part of the pit surface classified as context [02]. This context [02] comprised of fine-grained light yellow/brown clay with building material. Context [04] was a light green/brown soil with, in the north east corner of the pit, some snail shells.

² OS 1st edition 1865 Sheet XXXIV 1:2500

³ OS 3rd edition 1906 Kent Sheet 34.09 1:2500



Fig 3: Flints assemblage [05]

Immediately below this context was a flint assemblage [05] with six large flints, each 20cm by 20cm in size. The flints were closely grouped (see picture below) but there was no sign of mortar on their surfaces.

A distinctive layer of black material extended from the northern edge of the pit, westwards towards the flint group [06]. This layer, interpreted as being decaying vegetation or humus, was very narrow with a maximum width of 20mm. To the west of the flint group a seventh context was identified, comprising a layer of fine chalk and silt containing many small snail shells.[07] Positioned above context [08] and at the same depth as contexts [06] and [07] was a blackened feature identified as a solidified pool of bitumen. Below this feature, in contact with contexts [06] and [07] and extending from a depth of 60cm to 80cm was context [08], a layer of brown clay with some flint. Finally, below this and extending across the whole pit was context [10], a yellow-brown fine silty clay.



Fig 4: Detail from south east side of pit

Black humus layer [06], depth 0.5m
 Snail shell layer [07]

All contexts except for [08] and [10] contained 19th -20th century pottery, although amounts were not large. Very small amounts of Roman and medieval pottery were found in [08] and [10], including a small sherd of samian ware. Animal bone, shell and iron were found in all contexts, except for [06] (humus layer) and [09] (solid bitumen). A copper alloy coin, of 20mm diameter, was found in context 1, but its inscription was indecipherable due to corrosion.

5. Interpretation

The lowest layers [08] and [10] do seem to date from earlier times, with layers above this dating from the 19th century onwards. The layer of fine chalk and silt with numerous snail shells [07] is likely to be the remains of the bed of the mill pond. Its position to the west of the pit and the fact that it did not extend across the whole pit confirms the map survey results suggesting the pit was sited on the edge of the mill pond. The flint features may have been a structure associated with the pond or mill. The narrow band of humus would have been a stand of vegetation on the site, possibly pond vegetation or marginal vegetation at the pond edge or on the bank. The context immediately above this [04] is likely have been formed by levelling of the site after demolition of the pond and may include parts of the water retaining structure

that must have run along the western edge of the pond, parallel to Water Lane. The bitumen found could have had a variety of uses⁴ but was probably used on this site as a waterproof binder or coating to structures, buildings or features⁵.

6. Final Comments

Signs of occupation from Roman to current times were found on this site, but the remains of the mill pond were of particular interest, indicating Water Lane's more industrial past.

7. Acknowledgements

Great thanks are due to Mr and Mrs Montrose for permission to dig in their garden and the very welcome refreshments they provided.

Lesley Shea

November 2008

⁴ Dussek, K. 2006. The History of Bitumen. www.soci.org.uk/SCI/groups/cmt/2006/reports/pdf/Dussek.pdf

⁵ English Heritage Thesaurus. http://thesaurus.english-heritage.org.uk/thesaurus.asp?thes_no=129
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Small Finds



Small Finds Details

SF28: This small disc of highly corroded metal is probably a coin but any design is indecipherable.