



Understanding Ospringe

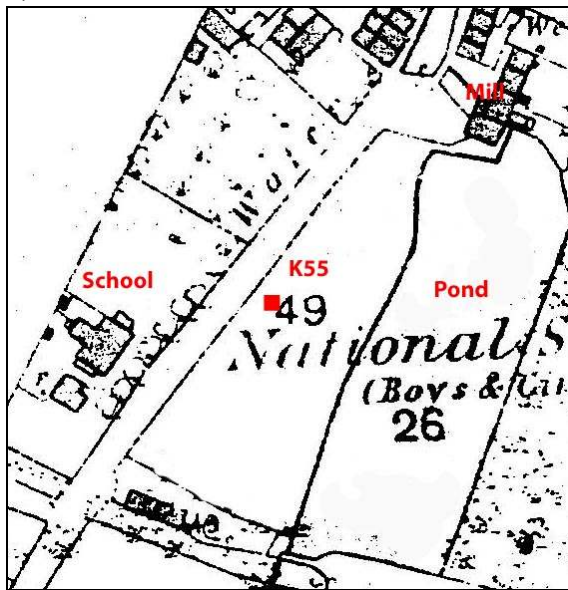
Report for Keyhole pit 55 47 Water Lane, Ospringe, Kent OS Grid Reference: TR 00250 60713

1. Introduction

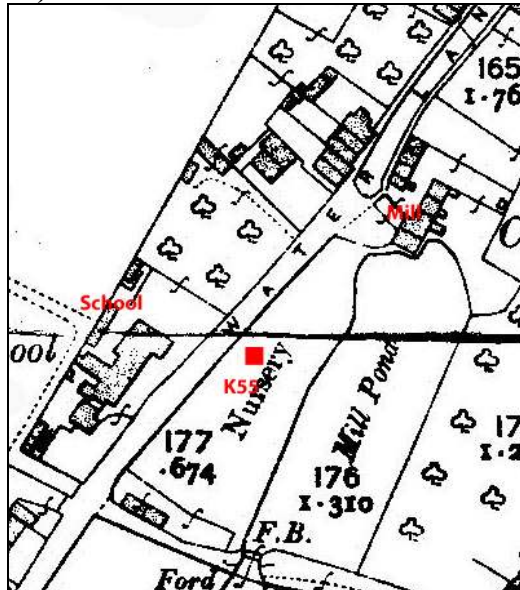
47 Water Lane is a modern brick bungalow built circa 1959¹ on the eastern side of Water Lane, opposite the school. In 1865² the site of the bungalow had not been built upon and where the rear garden now is there was a large pond which fed a corn mill to its north.

Fig 1: The location of K55 in 1865 and 1906

a) 1865



b) 1906³



2. Location of pit

It was decided to site the pit in the front garden of the bungalow, as close to the road as was practical. The reasons for this were twofold: to be as far as possible from the site of the millpond, whose existence is already well documented and to see if the pit could cast any light on activity in Water Lane during the medieval period.

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

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

² OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2500

³ OS 1907 Sheet XXXIV Scale: 1:2500

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. Only half of context 04 was excavated and only to a depth of 25cm due to time constraints. 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 were carefully recorded. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down and watered and the turf replaced.

4. The findings

The uppermost context 01 consisted of a fine-grained hard, dry soil, a light greyish brown in colour. This context extended to a depth of 23cm across the whole pit and contained a large amount of building rubble, including bricks, chalk and mortar and plaster. Beneath this the soil became a more yellowish brown colour and much more compacted, only possible to break up with a pickaxe. The volume of building material decreased significantly within this second context, which formed a layer 27cm deep across the whole pit. At a depth of 50cm a yellowish brown clay layer appeared (context 03) which contained a large amount of small rounded flints evenly dispersed throughout the whole context. Beneath this 15cm-deep layer was context 04, a layer of large flints interspersed with a loose, dark orangey brown soil. This context was not fully excavated, but extended to a depth of at least 25cm.



Fig 2: Full depth excavated in K55, with tabs marking the changes in context.

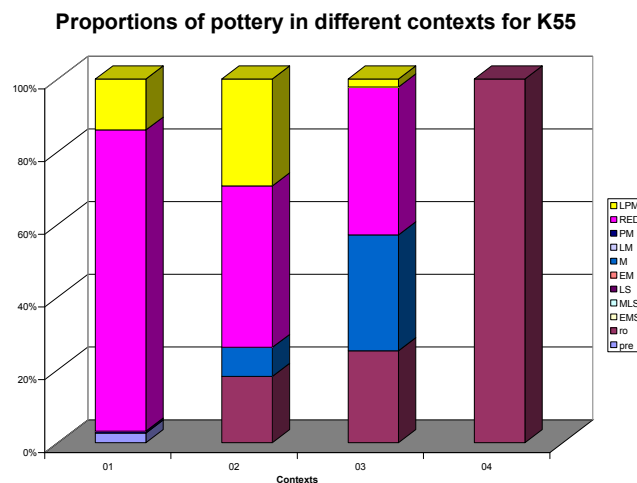
As well as the building rubble already mentioned context 01 also contained relatively large amounts of window glass and iron, mainly in the form of barbed wire. Other finds included two clay pipe mouth pieces, dating from the nineteenth century, and one clay pipe bowl dating from the late seventeenth century. Context 02 contained further nineteenth century clay pipe fragments as well as significant amounts of coal and slag. In context 03 the quantity of finds decreased overall compared to the previous two contexts, but proportionately high amounts of animal bone, shell and slag were discovered. The most significant find in context 04 was a worked flint in very good condition (Small Find 13). Other finds of interest included animal bones, some of which showed evidence of gnawing or butchery.

Fig 3: Worked flint from context 04



Nearly all of the pottery in context 01 dates from the post-medieval and late post-medieval periods, although there are also three fragments which are very likely to be prehistoric. Similarly context 02 yielded a large amount of late post-medieval pottery as well as a few shards of medieval pottery and some dating from the Roman or Romano-British periods. Context 03 produced very little late post-medieval pottery and some well abraded fragments of medieval and Roman or Romano-British pottery. In contrast all the pottery found in context 04 dated from the Roman period. In the graph below, the 19th-20th century period is represented as yellow and pink, the medieval and Roman as blue and maroon.

Fig 4: Pottery by chronological period. Total for K55: 0.95 kg



5) Interpretation

The majority of the finds in contexts 01 and 02 are contemporaneous with the later existence and demolition of the corn mill. The anomalies of the early clay pipe and the prehistoric pottery suggest that the land may have been well turned over at the time of the construction of the bungalow or even that soil may have been brought in from elsewhere in order to make up the garden to a required level. The finds in contexts 03 and 04 would generally appear to predate the construction of the mill, but here too the finds range across such a broad timescale from Neolithic to medieval that one must again assume that the soil has been well turned over, perhaps in this case at the time of the construction of the mill and its pond. Furthermore the fact that the sherds of medieval pottery are so small and rounded suggests that they have been turned over in the soil for centuries (i.e. midden scatter on land ploughed in medieval times), suggesting agricultural rather than occupation in this part of Water Lane.

6. Final Comments

This proved to be a difficult pit to dig and to interpret. Despite the presence of fragments of medieval pottery we were sadly unable to achieve our aim of finding out more about habitation in Ospringe during this period, except in a negative way.

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Raymond Godfrey and his mother for allowing us to dig in her garden.

Suzanne Miles

December 2008

Small Finds



SF13

Small Finds Details

SF13: Rectangular worked flint, with prominent striking platform at one end. The other end is more irregular and a section has possibly been removed. One edge has been retouched, with very small facets giving a serrated effect. This is probably an early neolithic serrated blade, see Butler 2005 p 131 Nos. 1-3.